

MISSION IN AN AGE OF MIGRATION: CONGREGATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN
IMMIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES

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To my loving and supportive wife,
Kelly Rynn Sappington,
this project would have been impossible
without your sacrifice and encouragement.

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To my Lord, may your name be hallowed in all the earth and among all nations.

ABSTRACT

Migration has been a means of mission throughout history. In our day the global flow of migration has shifted from North-South to South-North. Representative of this shift is the presence of more than one and a half million African-born immigrants residing in the United States; the majority of whom are Christians. Many Africans view their sojourning to the United States through the lens of mission and often participate in an immigrant church. In the midst of an increasing pluralized religious landscape, American churches should be willing to build partnerships with African immigrant churches and become collaborators in mission.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States is undergoing what may prove to be the greatest demographic shift in its history, and the church is facing a pivotal decision in how it will respond to this change.

-- Jenny Hwang Yang, "Immigrants in the US: A Missional Opportunity"

For its first two hundred years (and the century and a half of colonization before its founding) immigrants coming to the United States overwhelmingly hailed from the British Isles and Western Europe, but with the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, America increasingly became a mosaic of cultures and ethnicities. The broader impact of that legislation was experienced in July 2011, when for the first time in U.S. history, minority births represented the majority of all American births.¹

Although the United States has often been called a "nation of immigrants," Americans have not always been receptive towards non-European immigrants entering and "changing" their country. More alarming is the fact that this xenophobic perspective is quite prominent among Christians and white evangelicals more specifically. A 2006 poll by the Pew Research Center demonstrated that 63% of white evangelicals viewed immigrants as a threat to their customs and values.² This number is

¹ Sabrina Tavernise, "Whites Account for Under Half of Births in US," *New York Times*, May 17, 2002, accessed March 27, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/us/whites-account-for-under-half-of-births-in-us.html?_r=0.

² Pew Research Center, "Attitudes Toward Immigration: In the Pulpit and the Pew," April 25, 2006, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2006/04/25/attitudes-toward-immigration-in-the-pulpit-and-the-pew/>.

not surprising when one considers that the vast majority (88%) of white evangelicals say their views on immigration are primarily influenced by political and economic concerns rather than their Christian faith.³ Hopefully, this trend will be reversed among the broader evangelical population as a growing number of Christian leaders support a biblical view of immigrants and migration.⁴ While not ignoring the “rule of law,” these evangelical leaders have advocated for immigrants to be treated justly and respectfully. What is yet to be seen is how these shifting views will be translated into new ways of acting toward immigrant communities, especially through the local church.

As churches in the United States awaken to the fact that the peoples of the earth now live among them, healthy models of ministry and partnership will be needed. Dr. Enoch Wan has been especially helpful in this regard. In *Diaspora Missiology*, he provides a biblical and practical foundation for churches desiring to engage in cross-cultural ministry with immigrant communities.⁵ Wan identifies three ways churches can be involved in diaspora missions: missions *to* the diaspora, missions *through* the diaspora, and missions *by and beyond* the diaspora [italics mine]. One of the most important aspects of Wan’s taxonomy is his appreciation of the role of the diaspora community in mission [notice the second and third expressions of diaspora missiology are *through*, *by*, and *beyond* the immigrant community itself].

³ Jenny Hwang Yang, “Immigrants in the US: A Missional Opportunity,” in *Global Diasporas and Mission*, eds. Chandler H. Im and Amos Young (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 151.

⁴ Note the signatories of The Evangelical Immigration Table at <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/influential-signatories/>.

⁵ Enoch Wan, ed., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011).

For local churches to be faithful and effective in their mission to diaspora communities, Christians will need to “shift from thinking about migrants chiefly as objects of charity and outreach to viewing them as potential leaders and teachers in mission and ministry movements.”⁶ It should also be noted that while the United States is home to a growing number of non-Christian immigrant groups⁷, the overwhelming majority (74%) of foreign-born people living in the United States identify themselves as Christian.⁸ In addition, many of those Christians view their migration to the United States through the lens of God’s redemptive purposes. They see themselves as agents of God’s blessing and mission. The missional implications of partnership with Christian immigrants are great.

Included in this group of foreign-born Christians are a growing number of Africans. Today, there are more than one and a half million African-born immigrants residing in the United States.⁹ In fact, America is now the primary destination of regular African immigration. The majority of African-born immigrants entering the United States identify as Christian. Upon entering the West, many African immigrants seek out an ethnic congregation that closely fits their cultural heritage. Though most Westerners are unaware of these African immigrant churches, respected African immigrant scholar

⁶ Christine D. Pohl, “Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission,” *Missiology* 31, no. 1 (January 2003): 10.

⁷ J.D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 59.

⁸ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants,” March 8, 2012, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/03/us-fact-sheet.pdf>.

⁹ Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani, ed., *African Immigrant Religions in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 2.

Jehu Hanciles writes, "In Europe and the United States, African Christians have formed Christian congregations at an astonishing rate and inserted themselves into the complex narrative of a post-Christendom Western Christianity."¹⁰ Many African immigrants have a desire to not only reach the immigrant community but to impact an increasingly secularized American society.

Since 2009, Pantego Bible Church of Fort Worth, TX has been in partnership with an African immigrant church in its community. This relationship began when a group of leaders from the African congregation requested the use of a worship space from Pantego Bible Church. Over the past seven years, the partnership has become more intimate and mutual. In August 2011, the African immigrant church (now called ReGenesis) became a congregation of Pantego Bible Church. Though still holding a separate worship service in Kirundi and Swahili, ReGenesis began to integrate more into the life and ministries of Pantego Bible Church. Hanciles writes, "The rarity of close or sustained association between immigrant congregations and homegrown churches is worthy of note."¹¹ This statement demonstrates the unique relationship that exists between ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church.

This thesis-project will be divided into five sections. The remainder of this first chapter, will look more deeply at the issues related to the opportunity and setting of local cross-cultural congregational partnerships in the United States. The thesis-project will pay particular attention to African immigrant churches and their relationship to

¹⁰ Jehu J. Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies," *Mission Studies* 30, no. 1 (2013): 72.

¹¹ Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries," 76.

majority-culture churches. Chapter Two will provide a theological framework for migration and mission. The third chapter will offer review of the most pertinent literature in the field. Chapter Four will share the project design and initial results of semi-structured interviews involving the pastors of four congregation-to-congregation partnerships. Chapter Five will conclude with outcomes of the project as well as some reflections from the entirety of the research conducted.

Migration

Migration is a prevailing feature of the human experience. People, irrespective of their geography or generation, move from one place to another. This movement occurs at both the individual and communal levels. For example, when one leaves their parents' home for university in another state, she migrates. Or, when an ethnic group flees their village from the advance of a malevolent militia, they migrate. The factors leading to migration are manifold. Sometimes, the cause of a particular migration is difficult to parse. This can be heard in the stories of many Central American migrants to the United States. Are they fleeing violence or seeking economic opportunity? Do they desire to be reunited with family or are they pursuing a better future for their children?

Today, migration (especially of the transnational variety) is more commonplace than at any other time in history. The United Nations estimates there were 232 million international migrants in 2013.¹² This number is up from 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990. With one in every thirty-two persons living outside their land of birth or

¹² The United Nations, "Population Facts," September 2013, accessed March 27, 2015, http://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/The_number_of_international_migrants.pdf.

citizenship¹³, the world truly is getting smaller. Though it is true that people have always been on the move, the current number of migrants is unprecedented: "From the 1960s, international migrations have escalated in volume, velocity, and complexity and transformed into a truly global phenomenon."¹⁴ As one thinker put it, migrations today should be measured "on the scale of continents."¹⁵

Over the past several decades migration has not only increased in rate but shifted in terms of sender-receiver orientation from North-South to South-North. This shift is due in part to a number of factors including the less-than-desirable economic conditions existing in developing nations, mostly situated in the southern hemisphere. Some in the South seek access to countries that afford them a better education or job opportunity, others flee unsecure locations:

Until the late 1950s international migration chiefly involved movement from the highly developed, politically powerful nations to areas in the non-Western world characterized by agrarian systems and relatively weak political institutions. Since the 1960s, migrant movement has been predominantly from areas with weak economic and political systems to centers of global dominance and advanced industrial growth.¹⁶

From the 16th century through the middle of the 20th century migration patterns were significantly influenced by colonial powers interested in extending their economic and national interests. Today, migration patterns are still influenced by economics but more in terms of the individual level than the nation-state or empire.

¹³ Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries," 65.

¹⁴ Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 172.

¹⁵ Elie Wiesel, quoted in Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission," *Missiology* 31, no. 1 (January 2003): 3.

¹⁶ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 172.

As a great multitude of Europeans moved to other lands during the colonial period they brought not only their armadas and trade but their cultures and religions. Europeans wielded overwhelming religious influence in places like North America, South America and Australia. By the turn of the twentieth century those three continents were over ninety percent Christian.¹⁷ Eventually, Africa and Asia were also impacted by colonialism's missionary impulse, though this was not realized by the close of the nineteenth century. In 1910, only 9.4 percent of Africans and 2.4 percent of Asians were adherents to Christianity.¹⁸ Today, however, over 60 percent of professing Christians live outside the West. As Philip Jenkins has demonstrated, global Christianity has taken on a "new face" over the past century.¹⁹

As the majority of migrants now originate from the South, many of them are returning the favor of missionaries from centuries past and invigorating those communities in the North with the gospel. Jehu Hanciles grasps the serendipitous nature of this reversal:

It is a most extraordinary historical coincidence that the momentous "shift" in global Christianity's demographic and cultural center of gravity to the southern continents occurred at almost precisely the same time as the equally momentous reversal of the direction of international migrations. This means that, as in the previous five centuries, global migration movement is matched with the heartlands of the Christian faith and the chief sources of missionary movement.²⁰

¹⁷ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, *The Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), 188, 192, 198.

¹⁸ Johnson and Ross, *The Atlas of Global Christianity*, 112, 136.

¹⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

²⁰ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 178.

Those who were once the object of mission have become the missionaries. Many immigrants view their migration to West in the context of this “reverse mission.” This is most prominent among African immigrants to the United States and Europe.

African Immigrant Churches in the US

Surprising to many is the fact that the United States is home to 46 million international migrants; equal to about twenty percent of the total global immigrant population.²¹ With the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, larger numbers of Africans and Asians gave in to that “irrepressible human urge”²² and migrated to the United States. For the past five decades America has increasingly become a mosaic of cultures, ethnicities and religion expressions.

Current immigration figures indicate that more than fifty thousand Africans migrate to the United States every year.²³ These numbers help to explain how America has become the primary Western destination for African immigrants. The United States’ position is due in part to immigration restrictions established by Great Britain and France.²⁴ African immigrants come to the United States for a variety of reasons. Some arrive in the United States through educational or work visas; others are welcomed onto our shores through refugee resettlement programs. Regardless of how they arrive, the

²¹ The United Nations, “Population Facts,” September 2013, accessed March 27, 2015, http://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/The_number_of_international_migrants.pdf.

²² W.R. Bohning, quoted in, Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 139.

²³ Jacob K. Olupona, “Communities of Believers: Exploring African Immigrant Religion in the United States,” in *African Immigrant Religions in America*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 28.

²⁴ Olupona and Gemignani, *African Immigrant Religions in America*, 2.

primary reason Africans immigrate to the United States is driven by family ties and relational networks.²⁵ With over three-fourths of the African foreign-born population in America hailing from the sub-Saharan region, it is reasonable to conclude that many arrive in the United States as Christians.²⁶

The earliest African immigrant congregations in the United States can be traced to the 1970s.²⁷ Since that time a significant number of African immigrant churches have been planted across the United States, most of them being found in the northeastern and southern states. Though some African immigrants from Anglophone countries choose to join established white-majority English-speaking churches, most find a place of belonging among an immigrant congregation. Stephen Warner has noted that immigrant churches have a “settlement function” for new arrivals.²⁸ They assist immigrants in navigating the often rough tides of assimilating into a foreign society and social structure. African immigrants turn to immigrant churches for “identity formation, economic survival, spiritual nurture, cultural sustenance, and successful adaptation.”²⁹ Immigrant congregations also create a “junction between the Diaspora and the homeland,”³⁰ serving as a cultural and relational bridge between Africa and the West.

²⁵ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 315.

²⁶ The United States Census Bureau, “The Foreign-Born Population from Africa: 2008-2012,” October 2014, accessed March 27, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/acs/acsbr12-16.pdf>.

²⁷ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 350.

²⁸ Stephen Warner, quoted in, Olupona and Gemignani, *African Immigrant Religions in America*, 93.

²⁹ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 73.

³⁰ Olupona, “Communities of Believers,” 33.

Not every African immigrant church is cut from the same mold. Though most would be identified as evangelical and charismatic, four types of church formation among African immigrant churches have been identified.³¹ The *Abrahamic type* is characterized by independent churches that were founded by an African migrant. The majority of African immigrant churches in the United States fit this category. The *Macedonian type* of congregation was initiated by the sending of a missionary from an African-based ministry or church. The third category could be labeled the *Jerusalem type*. These African immigrant churches operate under the authority structure of Western mainline denominational structures. The *Samuel-Eli type* is more related to association than formation. Churches that fit this category are established English-speaking churches which have a significant and active African membership.

African immigrant churches, regardless of their type, often exhibit a strong missionary impulse. In most cases these evangelistic activities are directed toward the immigrant population. These efforts often produce significant numbers of converts. As Ebaugh and Chafetz have demonstrated, migration intensifies religious consciousness, fosters religious commitment, and increases the possibilities of religious conversion.³² Immigrant congregations are uniquely poised to incarnate the gospel among groups within society that are often forgotten or marginalized. Unfortunately, most African immigrants and their churches are unknown to the evangelical community in their area. Interaction with immigrant congregations would help bring spiritual vitality and

³¹ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 326.

³² Helen R. Ebaugh and Janet S. Chafetz, *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations* (New York: AltaMira, 2000), 401.

evangelistic zeal to the mission efforts of American churches. In the midst of an increasing pluralized religious landscape within the United States, American churches should link arms with African immigrant churches and become collaborators in mission.

Congregational Partnerships

North American churches have been partnering with their counterparts overseas for years. In the post-colonial era, international cross-cultural congregational partnerships began forming in the 1980s and have become increasingly popular over the past four decades.³³ These partnerships have typically been initiated due to a common missional interest between a North American congregation and a congregation in the Global South. That common interest has varied but has included activities from church planting to orphan care to education to feeding programs in the area in which the Global South church is located. This point should not be underestimated – congregational partnerships have usually involved an enterprising, entrepreneurial North American church which has missional interests in a particular location and so forms a relationship with an indigenous congregation which has the ability to help them fulfill their plans. This is not to say that the indigenous church has no desire for this partnership or that the North American congregation does not have an authentic desire to build gospel-centered relationships with their brothers and sisters in the developing world. It is to highlight that the fact that the partnership takes place where the North American church sees a *need* and has an *interest* in partnering because of its limited

³³ Janel Kragt Bakker, *Sister Churches: American Congregations and Their Partners Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

local knowledge. This is evidenced in the willingness of the North American church to invest financial and human resources in and through their Global South congregational partner.

But what about cross-cultural partnerships within the United States: Do American churches believe that immigrant congregations in their community might be able to assist them with the *need* to make disciples in their area? Do American churches have an *interest* in partnering with an immigrant congregation when they have more local knowledge of the culture and community? Though these questions are not easily answered, one African church scholar living in the United States is skeptical.³⁴ While Jehu Hanciles may have every right to be doubtful regarding the interest of most American churches to partner with African immigrant churches, few would question the importance of identifying healthy models of local cross-cultural partnerships for the purpose of igniting that interest. The following case study is provided for this reason.

A Case Study of Pantego Bible Church and ReGenesis

Between 2008 and 2012, an estimated 15,000 Congolese immigrants and 6,000 Burundian immigrants arrived in the United States.³⁵ Many of these immigrants were resettled in America through the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Texas has received the greatest number of African refugees from these two countries. In fact, community leaders within the Congolese community estimate their

³⁴ Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries," 76.

³⁵ The United States Census Bureau, "The Foreign-Born Population from Africa: 2008-2012," October 2014, accessed March 27, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/acs/acsbr12-16.pdf>.

population to be over 3,500 in North Texas alone.³⁶ A large number of this immigrant group is Protestant Christians who have established independent African congregations upon their arrival.

In 2009, a small group of Burundian and Congolese believers began attending the worship services of Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, TX. These immigrants were leaders of an African congregation that was exploring churches with whom they could partner. The African church was in need of a space to hold worship services in their native languages of Kirundi and Swahili. After attending Pantego Bible Church for a few weeks and believing the church to be a potential partner, the African leaders requested a meeting with Pantego Bible Church's pastor. During that meeting, Pantego Bible Church discovered that these men and their families were refugees who had fled their homelands due to war and ethnic violence. Some from their congregation had been in the United States for over five years, others had newly arrived.

Though Pantego Bible Church had been engaged in cross-cultural partnerships internationally, this was the first time in its one hundred and nine year history that it was considering a partnership with a local ethnic congregation. This absence of partnership was due in part to Pantego Bible Church's establishment as an independent church. Unlike their denominational counterparts in the Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church or Presbyterian Church in America, Pantego Bible Church was not connected to networks of ethnic churches. The African church leaders who were

³⁶ Unpublished document from The Forced Immigration innovation Project at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.

seeking the use of worship space from Pantego Bible Church were offering this predominantly white, 2,000-member church an unprecedented opportunity.

After some consideration, Pantego Bible Church offered the African church the use of their student ministry building on Sunday afternoons. Under this arrangement the African church would remain completely independent from Pantego Bible Church and would have limited access to the facility. However, there would be no charge for the use of the facility. No timeline was established for the African church's use of the facility, though the partnership was to be regularly evaluated. Pantego Bible Church's leadership saw the opportunity as being mutually beneficial.

Soon after the partnership began, the leaders of Pantego Bible Church and the African church met to discuss how they could grow the relationship between their congregations. The elders of the African church requested that Dr. David Daniels, the Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church, meet with them on a regular basis to offer pastoral training and development. Dr. Daniels enthusiastically agreed. The elders also mentioned that English as a Second Language classes would also be helpful to their people. Lastly, the leaders planned two lunch fellowships for their congregations to meet one another.

In 2010, much of what the leaders discussed was put in motion. Dr. Daniels was meeting with the African elders. English as a Second Language classes had begun in one of the apartment communities where several of the African families lived. Though the language barrier presented some challenges, the two congregations enjoyed each other's fellowship over the two lunches that had been planned. In addition to what had

been discussed by the leaders, the partnership grew in other ways. First, some of the children and students from the African church began attending Sunday School and mid-week ministries. Second, Pantego Bible Church members began to provide an “Essentials Bag” each month for families in the African church. These bags were filled with toiletry and household items which were not covered by government assistance. Third, Pantego Bible Church helped the African church with the purchase of a van. Transportation had been one of the greatest challenges of the African church up to that point. Lastly, choirs from the African church led in the worship services of Pantego Bible Church.

In August 2011, the relationship between Pantego Bible Church and the African church (now called ReGenesis) shifted from a position of independence to one of deepening partnership. ReGenesis’ elders chose to make their church a congregation of Pantego Bible Church under the authority of Pantego’s elders. The decision was made in light of ReGenesis’ lack of ability to financially provide for itself. The African elders desired not only financial stability but the opportunity for long-term partnership with Pantego Bible Church. Though now a ministry of Pantego Bible Church, ReGenesis’ leadership would still provide day-to-day oversight and care for their congregation.

The partnership between Pantego Bible Church and ReGenesis was not without challenges. First, the difference in language made communication difficult at times. Second, there were also differing expectations regarding time (monochronic v. polychronic). However, the biggest challenge which the two congregations faced involved issues related to leadership. The first hurdle occurred in 2010 when Pantego

Bible Church sought to bring reconciliation in the midst of a leadership conflict facing ReGenesis. Two pastors within the church, Pastor January and Pastor Sheberingi, were vying for ultimate authority. Dr. Daniels encouraged a solution that would keep both pastors in the church. Before long, the lead pastor (Pastor January) left ReGenesis and brought several families with him. Pastor Sheberingi then assumed the lead pastor position. Unfortunately, additional conflicts involving ReGenesis' pastoral leadership would follow. In January 2012, Pastor Sheberingi would leave ReGenesis and split the church. Thankfully, the partnership between ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church continued throughout these challenges. One constant throughout these transitions was an elder by the name of Method Bigirimana.

Bigirimana and his family had been in the United States longer than the rest of the members of ReGenesis. Bigirimana and his wife, Valerie, both had professional jobs at John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth. He served as a medical translator; she worked as a nurse. As a translator, Bigirimana had developed the unique ability to “speak” for multiple parties and interests. At every meeting and through each trial faced by ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church, Bigirimana was present and helpful. In 2012, he completed a year-long leadership development program at Pantego Bible Church. The program had emphases in Bible backgrounds, systematic theology, hermeneutics, missions and practical ministry. In addition to his training, Bigirimana had developed a growing friendship with Dr. Daniels and with Roger Sappington, the Global Impact Pastor. In June 2013, he was called to serve as the lead pastor of ReGenesis.

Today, ReGenesis is a thriving congregation of over one hundred and fifty members. The congregation still meets each Sunday afternoon on the campus of Pantego Bible Church for their worship services. They have additional meetings throughout the week at other locations across the area. Many of the ReGenesis children attend Sunday School with the children of Pantego Bible Church. English as a Second Language classes continue, though there is now a greater diversity of peoples who participate in them. Several members of ReGenesis have gained their citizenship through the preparation provided by leaders of the English as a Second Language program.

ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church continue their partnership because they believe they have a common identity in Christ and a common mission through the gospel. They have been mutually blessed through their six-year long congregational partnership.

Five Factors Limiting Congregational Partnerships

In his article entitled “Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders,” Jehu Hanciles illustrates why partnerships between African immigrant churches and “homegrown” churches are a rarity in the United States. For Hanciles, the burden for this lack of association rests primarily upon the “homegrown” churches. He notes that many Christian immigrants experience disaffection or even outside rejection by their American brothers and sisters. This lack of hospitality and brotherly love causes some

immigrants to feel alienated from Christians outside of their ethnic group.³⁷ Although Hanciles believes the lack of interaction between immigrant churches and “homegrown” churches is a complex phenomenon with multiple factors, he highlights five significant reasons for this lack of healthy, long-term partnerships to be: 1) paternalism and condescension, 2) the perception of African immigrants as needy and dependent, 3) entrenched perception of Africans as objects of mission, 4) theological difference and spiritual dissonance, and 5) a segmented religious landscape.³⁸

Paternalism and Condescension

Western Christianity (and American Christianity more specifically) still dominates the leadership structures of Global Christianity. This is due in part to superior economic resources and a history of establishing apostolic works beyond its borders. As is usually the case, power and humility rarely coexist. Positions of power in cross-cultural environments often lead to paternalism and attitudes of cultural superiority. Many Africans have experienced this lack of mutuality and humility at the hands of Western brothers and sisters both in their homelands and as immigrants in the West.

In the case of Pantego Bible Church’s partnership with ReGenesis, Pantego Bible Church has held the position of power in the relationship. This can be observed primarily through three aspects of the relationship. First, Pantego Bible Church owns the building in which ReGenesis worships. Second, since 2011 ReGenesis has been a

³⁷ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 75.

³⁸ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 76-82.

ministry under the authority of the elders of Pantego Bible Church. Third, Pantego Bible Church and its members support ReGenesis through a variety of economic means.

Has Pantego Bible Church's exercised paternalism or humility in its partnership with ReGenesis? This question is not easily answered and is highly subjective. The answer is most undoubtedly, "both." Since paternalism and humility are not absolutes, they are demonstrated and experienced across a spectrum. Depending upon the respondent, the answers could vary greatly. A more appropriate question for Pantego Bible Church might be, "how can it demonstrate an increasing posture of humility with ReGenesis." Paul Borthwick is helpful in this regard. He mentions three humility-building activities for Western Christians in their interaction with non-Western brothers and sisters: 1) tame the assertiveness, 2) listen and learn, and 3) genuine servanthood.³⁹ For Pantego Bible Church, this means understanding better the hopes and dreams of ReGenesis as a congregation and being in a position to humbly walk with them. This may mean that ReGenesis continues as a ministry of Pantego Bible Church for a decade or more. It could also mean that ReGenesis desires to branch away from Pantego Bible Church within the next year. The key is that Pantego Bible Church should not assert its will regarding ReGenesis' future but should instead listen and discover (from ReGenesis) the best way to serve. This already occurs at a leadership level between Pantego Bible Church and ReGenesis but needs to be extended more to the congregation as a whole.

³⁹ Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 119-122.

The Perception of African Immigrants as Needy and Dependent

While it is true that the African foreign-born population in the United States does include plenty of middle-class professionals, the majority of this group arrives in the West with significant economic need. Some churches and ministries in the United States recognize this need and seek to provide compassionate assistance. However, it has been expressed that this type interaction can produce unhealthy images of African Christians:

This means that the earliest (and often the only) contact some Western Christians and churches have with African migrants is in situations where the latter are desperately needy, vulnerable and powerless. The encounter with indigent migrants, combined with the harrowing images of Africans risking life and limb in their desperation to escape poverty and oppression, leaves little room for the notion that African Christians can be equal partners in ministry or effective missionaries.⁴⁰

This image of desperation is even more pronounced in Western Christians' involvement with refugees. Refugees from Africa often arrive in the United States with a limited educational background and without English language proficiency. These two factors make employment even more difficult to obtain and extend the period of dependence upon support structures.

In the mind of many Western Christians, Africa is seen as the "dark continent" – a place of substantial spiritual and material need. A prevailing view of American Christians toward African immigrants is that God brought them to the United States to rescue them from poverty, injustice and ignorance. ReGenesis is a congregation of once-refugee families. Pastor Bigirimana has shared with Pantego Bible Church that

⁴⁰ Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries," 77.

every family within his congregation has arrived in our country through the United States Refugee Resettlement Program. This is not representative of most African immigrant churches in America. For example, less than an hour down the road, the All Nations Congregation of Highland Park Presbyterian Church (an African-led and African-majority congregation) is filled with graduates from universities in the United States and professionals in a multitude of fields. The fact that every family in ReGenesis came to the United States as refugees makes it difficult for the congregation to have full economic independence. This is the reason why Pantego Bible Church has never required rent for the use of its facilities from ReGenesis. It is also why Pantego Bible Church has provided programs, such as English as a Second Language and Citizenship Classes, and economic assistance for the regular ministries of ReGenesis. ReGenesis' lack of financial resources was most likely the leading reason why they requested to become a ministry of Pantego Bible Church in August 2011.

To deny that ReGenesis has significant financial need would be to ignore the facts. However, having limited economic resources does not mean that a community is devoid of assets. In their landmark book *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, encourage Christians working with communities in poverty to consider the benefits of "asset-based community development" (ABCD).⁴¹ ABCD puts the emphasis on what the community has (skills, gifts, experiences, resources), as opposed to what it does not have.

⁴¹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 126.

Pantego Bible Church would do well to implement ABCD on a more consistent basis with the ReGenesis congregation. Pantego Bible Church's leaders have often relied upon the counsel of Pastor Bigirimana and other African leaders in their assessment of the needs and resources of the community. Pantego Bible Church's leaders have sought to limit their direct involvement with the congregation when it comes to decision making. This has been to empower Pastor Bigirimana. The best way forward may be for Pantego Bible Church's leaders to better introduce ABCD to Pastor Bigirimana and consider a possible plan of action regarding the congregation's involvement in the conversation. The Appreciative Inquiry process of ABCD⁴² could significantly benefit the future of the partnership between ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church.

Entrenched Perceptions of Africans as Objects of Mission

Christianity has never been a Western religion. However, for centuries Westerners comprised the great majority of adherents to the Christian faith. This was so much the case that in 1910 at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland only 17 of the more than 1,200 delegates came from outside the West.⁴³ At that point in history, over eighty percent of Christians lived in the West.⁴⁴ Over the past one hundred years since Edinburgh, radical shifts have occurred within Global

⁴² Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 136-139.

⁴³ Johnson and Ross, *The Atlas of Global Christianity*, xvi.

⁴⁴ Johnson and Ross, *The Atlas of Global Christianity*, x.

Christianity. Today, over sixty percent of Christians are non-Westerners.⁴⁵ The faith's "center of gravity" has moved significantly southward. The greatest pull is from sub-Saharan Africa.

From 1910 to 2010 the percentage of Christians in Africa exploded from 9% to over 48%.⁴⁶ African Christianity has grown at such speed that renowned missiologist Andrew Walls has written, "African Christianity must be seen as a major component of contemporary representative Christianity, the standard Christianity of the present age, a demonstration model of its character. That is, we may need to look at Africa today, in order to understand Christianity itself."⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the majority of Western Christians and their leaders are oblivious to the growth and prominence of African Christianity. Most still see Africans primarily as objects of mission rather than as co-collaborators in the missionary enterprise.

Pantego Bible Church's leaders have grown in their understanding of the missional potential of the ReGenesis congregation. At the beginning of the partnership, many within Pantego Bible Church saw ReGenesis through the lens of material and spiritual need. As the partnership developed, Pantego Bible Church began to realize the unique position ReGenesis had in evangelizing other Africans and other refugees. On several occasions Pantego Bible Church has assisted ReGenesis in outreaches to their community. In addition, Pantego Bible Church leaders have encouraged ReGenesis

⁴⁵ Todd Johnson, "Christianity in its Global Contexts, 1970-2020: Society, Religion and Mission," (South Hamilton, MA: The Center for the Study of Global Christianity, June 2013), 14.

⁴⁶ Johnson, "Christianity in its Global Contexts, 1970-2020: Society, Religion and Mission," 22.

⁴⁷ Andrew F. Walls, "African Christianity in the History of Religions," *Studies in World Christianity* 2 (1996): 186.

members to consider their opportunity to incarnate the gospel to non-Christian refugees living among them.

Pantego Bible Church could improve in this area by better educating its people and sharing the story of their partnership with ReGenesis with other churches. Part of that education involves helping church members understand that the United States is a vast mission field with a multitude of peoples yet to be reached. ReGenesis and other immigrant churches play a significant role in the mission to these people groups and the larger society. In addition to their missionary role within this country, immigrant churches are also positioned for disciple-making and church planting in the lands of their origin.⁴⁸

Theological Difference and Spiritual Dissonance

African immigrant Christians are “generally more traditional in their readings of the Bible, views on morality, approach to family life and theological outlook than Western Christians.”⁴⁹ When Hanciles writes that “theological difference” can be a contributing factor to a lack of partnership, he is speaking to the difference in theology between increasingly liberal mainline traditions and conservative, evangelical African immigrant churches. In fact, the Anglican Church of Nigeria found itself to be in such disagreement with the theological position of the Episcopal Church that it established a “missionary diocese” in America to provide a home for Anglican Africans who had

⁴⁸ Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011).

⁴⁹ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 79.

immigrated to the United States.⁵⁰ On the contrary, African congregations in the United States often find much in common with their “homegrown” evangelical counterparts.

In their five year partnership, ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church have not faced any significant theological conflicts. This is not to say that there are no theological differences between the two groups. ReGenesis, like the vast majority of other African immigrant churches, is more Pentecostal-charismatic than Pantego Bible Church. Ogbu Kalu notes that Pentecostalism has found a home within African churches because it “brings the resources of the Gospel as answers to questions raised within the primal worldviews.”⁵¹ This includes prayer encounters over demonic forces, prayers for healing of the sick, and an expectation of miracles. There is much that Pantego Bible Church can learn from ReGenesis in the area of faith, prayer and fasting.

A Segmented Religious Landscape

Since 1965, with the passing of more liberal immigration legislation aimed at non-Europeans, America’s ethnic diversity has become increasingly visible. Over these past five decades, general attitudes about immigration (especially among immigrants themselves) have shifted from an integrationist approach and the “melting pot” image to the picture of a “salad bowl” and the multiculturalism it projects. These evolving ideas on immigration affect immigrant religious communities and their engagement with broader society and culture in America. Jacob Olupona explains that “ideas of cultural and religious pluralism have created a context in which immigrants are no

⁵⁰ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 79.

⁵¹ Ogbu Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2007), 37.

longer expected to assimilate to an external norm.”⁵² This means that Africans and other immigrants entering the United States do not feel pressure to abandon their cultural identity nor their religious practices. The growth and spread of African immigrant churches in America is an expression of multiculturalism at work. And though this should be applauded, one unintended consequence of immigrants worshipping outside of majority-culture churches is that the interaction between African migrant Christians and their American counterparts is hindered.

In the midst of America’s segmented religious landscape, Pantego Bible Church and ReGenesis came into relationship because the leaders of ReGenesis intentionally pursued one. ReGenesis was in need of a worship space and Pantego Bible Church opened its doors.

A Response to the Five Factors Limiting Congregational Partnerships

If partnerships between African immigrant churches and “homegrown” congregations are going to become more widespread, then both groups will have to be in pursuit of one another and extend hands of hospitality:

Clearly, forging new relationships or interactions marked by constructive engagement and meaningful cooperation requires radical adjustment on both sides: including determined efforts to overcome the legacy of inequitable global power structures and a preparedness to think differently about the mission of the church in an era when no single center or cultural group can claim dominance.⁵³

⁵² Olupona and Gemignani, *African Immigrant Religions in America*, 3.

⁵³ Hanciles, “Migrants as Missionaries,” 82.

In some ways, the burden for interaction and cooperation falls upon the American Church. This starts with the recognition that African immigrant Christians could be sent by God to the West for missional purposes. Many Africans already view their immigration through this lens. Until American churches develop a spirit of mutuality (driven not only by the claims of the gospel but also by the mission of the church), there will be limited interaction.

It is a new day for the global church. The mission of the church is now from “everywhere to everyone.”⁵⁴ Akintunde Akinade has written, “This new configuration in world Christianity calls for continuous self-critical analysis and mutual reciprocity.”⁵⁵ Unfortunately, “self-critical analysis” and “mutual reciprocity” have not been the *modus operandi* of the majority of Western Christian leaders in their interaction with Christians from the Global South. This behavior has been evidenced not only internationally but also domestically with regards to the Western Church’s interaction with immigrant Christians. Immigrants are usually seen in terms of their economic need rather than what they can offer in terms of mission. Two factors are needed to help shift this thinking and behavior: 1) a biblically-informed theology of migration, and 2) an acceptance of the need for missionaries in the United States.

For the Christian, migration is not just an anthropological or historical phenomenon but also an integral aspect of God’s unfolding plan for creation. In the opening act of Scripture, the Creator gave mankind a mandate: “Be fruitful and multiply

⁵⁴ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

⁵⁵ Akintunde Akinade, “Non-Western Christianity in the Western World: African Immigrant Churches in the Diaspora,” in *African Immigrant Religions in America*, 97.

and *fill the earth* ... (italics mine).”⁵⁶ Man’s first directive would involve his eventual movement beyond Eden. Though this initial migration ultimately came as a result of man’s rebellion, the redemptive role of migration would be evident in the life of Abraham, the Exodus, the life of Jesus, and the sending of the church.

When the American Church acknowledges that it is not only a mission-sending source but also at home in a mission-receiving destination, it will celebrate the opportunity to partner with immigrant churches within its borders. Western Christian leaders should heed the words of noted African scholar Lamin Sanneh regarding the opportunity to partner with Christians from the global South – “When opportunity knocks the wise will build bridges while the timorous will build dams.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Genesis 1:28. All Scripture citations are taken from the English Standard Version, 2001, unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008), 287.

CHAPTER TWO

A MISSIONAL THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION

The Bible is a story of migrations. From Adam and Eve's "forced migration" from the Garden¹ to the relocation of God's people to the New Jerusalem², Scripture is replete with both physical migrations and the use of migration metaphors to highlight the spiritual life. Consider the following:

1. Yahweh "dispersed" the peoples from Babel so that they would fulfill his command to fill the earth.³
2. Abraham journeyed from Haran to Canaan in response to the call of God.⁴
3. As an early example of human trafficking, Joseph was sold into slavery and brought to Egypt.⁵
4. Years later, Jacob and his family would join Joseph due to a drought in Canaan.⁶
5. The Hebrews fled Egypt through the Exodus and migrated toward the Promised Land.⁷

¹ Genesis 3:23-24.

² Revelation 21:1-4.

³ Genesis 11:1-9; cf. Genesis 1:28.

⁴ Genesis 11:31-12:5.

⁵ Genesis 37:36.

⁶ Genesis 46:1ff.

⁷ Exodus 12:31ff.

6. Over the course of hundreds of years many from Israel would be exiled to foreign lands; some returning to their homeland in due time.⁸
7. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Egypt to keep him safe from Herod's infanticide.⁹
8. After the stoning of Stephen many of the post-Pentecostal believers fled to the Diaspora to avoid persecution in Jerusalem.¹⁰
9. Paul's missionary journeys demonstrated the role that migration would play in the spread of the gospel to "the end of the earth."¹¹

These movements of persons and peoples reveal the indispensable role that migration plays in the biblical narrative and in the mission of God.

It is important for Christians to have a theology of migration not only because migrations are ubiquitous in Scripture but because the immigrant perspective is integral to the identity of God's people. This was the case for Israel and is so for Church as well:

1. Yahweh called Israel to live as "strangers and sojourners" in the land to which he would lead them.¹²
2. As David prayed to Yahweh before the people, he voiced, "For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding."¹³

⁸ Israel's exile: 2 Kings 15:29, 17:6, 17:23. Judah's exile: Daniel 1:2; Jeremiah 52:28, 30; 2 Kings 24. Return: Ezra 1:5; Jeremiah 50.

⁹ Matthew 2:13-18.

¹⁰ Acts 8:1.

¹¹ Acts 13-28.

¹² Leviticus 25:23.

3. In eight simple words, Jesus demonstrated that his followers were also called to extend blessing to the alien among them – “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”¹⁴ By identifying himself with the stranger, Jesus was elevating the dignity of those who were often forgotten or maligned.
4. Speaking of the Old Testament saints, the writer of Hebrews described the faithful as those who lived as “strangers and aliens on the earth.”¹⁵
5. The Apostle Peter continued this theme by admonishing his hearers to approach the world as “sojourners and exiles.”¹⁶

For Israel and the Church, this immigrant identity is related to their separateness as God’s chosen people. This earth is ultimately not their home, so they are called to live as a sojourning people. In light of their immigrant identity and experience, God commands his people to live with intentional grace towards “the other” in their midst.¹⁷

The thematic significance of migration is often missed when one reads Scripture through a Western-centered lens. It is not that Westerners infrequently migrate. It is that their migrations are typically one of choice, as in the journey to university or relocating due to a new job opportunity. The migrations of the Bible typically took place in the midst of crisis. This type of migration is much more commonly experienced by

¹³ 1 Chronicles 29:15.

¹⁴ Matthew 25:35.

¹⁵ Hebrews 11:13.

¹⁶ 1 Peter 2:11.

¹⁷ Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Leviticus 19:34, 24:22; Numbers 15:15; Deuteronomy 10:19

the peoples of the Global South. Like the biblical people, they are more vulnerable to the effects of drought, civil unrest and persecution.

In this chapter, I will expand upon the theme of migration in Scripture and offer a more robust theology of migration. My theology of migration will be divided into four parts. I will consider the role of migration in light of the *imago Dei*, *Verbum Dei*, and *missio Dei*. In conclusion, I will offer some thoughts connected to the *visio Dei*.¹⁸

Speaking of the intersection of migration and theology, Catholic theologian Daniel Groody writes, “Migration is not only a social reality with profound implications but also a way of thinking about God and what it means to be human in the world, which can become an important impetus in the ministry of reconciliation and a compelling force in understanding and responding to migrants and refugees.”¹⁹

Imago Dei

Migration is fraught with vulnerability. The Apostle Paul, who spent many years of his life as a “sent one,” knew well the precarious position of the immigrant. He described his migrant experience as being in constant danger – “in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers.”²⁰ Immigrants today face similar challenges: capsized boats, corrupt “middlemen,” deserts, traffickers,

¹⁸ Daniel Groody, “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees,” *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 638-667. The four-fold framework (*Imago Dei*, *Verbum Dei*, *Missio Dei* and *Visio Dei*) of my theology of migration is borrowed from Groody.

¹⁹ Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 642.

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:26.

etc.²¹ Even if they make it to their intended destination, many face rejection by the majority population. One reason for this stigmatization lies in the labels attached to some of those in transit – refugee, migrant, undocumented, and internally displaced person (IDP). These labels often connote ideas of weakness, strangeness, and criminality.

Though understanding the inescapable need to classify groups in terms of their political status, Groody sees that “labels often generate asymmetrical relationships, leaving migrants and refugees vulnerable to control, manipulation, and exploitation.”²² To counteract the dehumanizing stereotypes which often arise from these labels, it is important to view immigrants in light of their human identity rather than simply their political status. In the Christian perspective, there is no greater descriptor of the essence of humanity than the *imago Dei*.

In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, God’s creation of the heavens and the earth is described. Over six days God laid the foundation for life on earth – light and darkness, land and water, plants and animals. At the conclusion of each of these creative acts, God declared them to be “good.”²³ Then, towards the end of the sixth day the narrative shifts as God applies special attention to the final piece of his handiwork.

²¹ David D. Kirkpatrick, “Before Dangers at Sea, African Migrants Face Perils of a Lawless Libya,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2015, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/28/world/africa/libya-migrants-mediterranean.html>. Lauren Fox, “Running Scared: Young Migrants Face Danger at Home, the Border,” *U.S. News & World Report*, June 25, 2014, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/06/25/running-scared-young-migrants-face-danger-at-home-the-border>.

²² Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 643.

²³ Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.

Genesis 1:26 reads, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” At the end of the sixth day, God saw everything that he had made and “behold, it was *very good*.”²⁴ Man, made in the image of God (*imago Dei*), was the pinnacle and completion of creation.

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? According to theologian Millard Erickson this phrase has multiple layers of meaning.²⁵ One of those layers is certainly *relational*. Man has the ability to communicate and connect with others. Man and woman together are created in the image of God. Their relational unity and diversity mirrors that of the Godhead. Another layer of meaning is the *substantive*. Man is spiritual, just as God is spiritual. Man has reason and a will, just as God has reason and a will. Though man is not a mirror image of God in substance, he does have marks of the Creator throughout his being. Possibly the most significant, and often missed, layer of meaning regarding the “image of God” in man is the *functional* layer. The functional layer highlights the way in which man mirrors God in his activities. Man is given “dominion” over the earth, as God has dominion over all things.²⁶ Man is also called to be a junior creator – “be fruitful and multiply.”²⁷ These ideas are collectively understood as man being God’s representative rulers over earth. Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser notes, “It was as if the Sovereign King turned over to vassal kings the

²⁴ Genesis 1:31.

²⁵ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 517-536.

²⁶ Genesis 1:26.

²⁷ Genesis 1:28.

stewardship of all that he had made on the earth.”²⁸ Man was given an unprecedented assignment – display God’s glory (character) to creation. Being made in God’s image man is endowed with not only substantial responsibility but also inestimable worth.

Daniel Carroll, Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, provides three implications of the *imago Dei* in regards to our view of and interaction with immigrants.²⁹ First, the *imago Dei* should remind us of the value of each person. Immigration is ultimately not about policy but about people; human beings made in God’s image who have worth and significance. The *imago Dei* demonstrates that immigrants have value both ontologically and functionally. Ontologically, immigrants should be respected and cared for because of their humanity. Functionally, immigrants should be viewed in light of the immense potential they possess “to contribute to society and to the common good through their presence, work, and ideas.”³⁰

The second implication of the *imago Dei* relates to universal human rights. Since man is made in the image of God and has inestimable value, it naturally follows that each man should be afforded certain basic rights. To violate those rights would be to violate the One in whose image they were created and live. Unfortunately, human rights language is often lacking from the discussion surrounding immigration; the rights of the nation-state (border security, documentation, financial implications) often hold sway over the rights of individual immigrants. Groody describes how establishing a

²⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 129.

²⁹ M. Daniel Carroll, Jr., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2013), 47-51.

³⁰ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 48.

theology of migration in the *imago Dei* leads to a securing of human rights for immigrants:

Defining the migrant first and foremost in the terms of *imago Dei* roots such persons in the world very differently than if they are principally defined as social and political problems or as illegal aliens; the theological terms include a set of moral demands as well. Without adequate consideration of the humanity of the migrant, it is impossible to construct just policies ordered to the common good and to the benefit of society's weakest members.³¹

Human rights, though rooted in the *imago Dei* of Scripture, also find expression in more secular documents like the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights³² and the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.³³ Carroll acknowledges that human rights language has at times been used arbitrarily by certain special interest groups. Nonetheless, he encourages believers to consider immigration from a rights perspective instead of a political or socioeconomic one: "Believers must examine their hearts for possible contrary allegiances that might lead them to want to deny entry to those from elsewhere – whether this be on cultural, racial, socioeconomic, educational, or political grounds."³⁴ Carroll does not mean that Christians are obligated to support open borders. Rather, that Christians should allow the *imago Dei* to inform their perspective on immigrants and immigration policy.

³¹ Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 645.

³² United Nations, accessed April 7, 2015, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <http://un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

³³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, accessed April 7, 2015, http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm.

³⁴ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 48.

The third implication of the *imago Dei*'s bearing upon immigration is concerned with how immigrants view themselves. Many immigrants feel inferior because of their lower socio-economic status, lack of formal education, or difficulty with the English language. In these circumstances, Christians have an opportunity to help immigrants recognize the dignity with which they are endowed, regardless of how they compare to the host culture. When combined with the broader claims of the gospel, the *imago Dei* leads immigrants to envision a future beyond their current state, filled with hope and possibility.

Verbum Dei

The image of God in man was marred not long after creation. The first humans rejected the authority of God and their role as vice-regents over the earth.³⁵ By desiring to be king universal, Adam and Eve were in effect renouncing their position as God's stewards and representative rulers. When sin broke into the world through their rebellion, the *imago Dei* was disfigured.³⁶ This corruption, though not reducing the value of man, limited his ability to reflect the character of his Creator. Sin also brought disorder to the cosmos and created discord between Adam and Eve and between man and God. Yet, within the judgment which resulted from their disobedience, a divine promise was given to our original ancestors. An "offspring" of the woman would come to crush the work of the serpent that had caused sin to reign on earth.³⁷

³⁵ Genesis 3:1-13.

³⁶ Genesis 3:1-13.

³⁷ Genesis 3:15.

Jesus came to undo the work of sin and death wrought by the lies of the serpent and the actions of man. By his birth through a virgin mother, Jesus revealed his identity as the “offspring” of the woman. Through his death and resurrection he demonstrated his power over sin and death, thus overcoming the chaos which resulted from man’s rebellion. Jesus was the perfect embodiment of the *imago Dei*. He was God’s man, or more precisely the God-Man, on earth. The Apostle John described Jesus’ unique nature as the Word of God (or *Verbum Dei*); God’s revelation (God’s Word) to man in the form of a human being.

In the first chapter of John’s Gospel, the evangelist uses language similar to a migration narrative to describe the journey of the *Verbum Dei* from his life with God to his life with man. Consider the following verses:

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was *coming into the world*. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He *came to his own*, and his own people did not receive him. But to all *who did receive him*, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word *became flesh* and *dwelt among us*, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth [italics mine].”³⁸

Jesus moved from heaven to earth. Upon his arrival some received him, some did not. Jesus was not just passing through; rather, he “dwelt” among the people to whom he was sent. Karl Barth speaks of the incarnation of the *Verbum Dei* as the “way of the Son of God into the far country.”³⁹ Jesus is a cosmic migrant who left the blessedness of heaven for the brokenness of earth. Groody expounds upon the redemptive nature of

³⁸ John 1:9-14.

³⁹ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation: Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (New York: Continuum, 2004), 157-210.

the *Verbum Dei's* migration: "Through the *Verbum Dei*, Jesus' kenosis and death on the cross, God overcomes the barriers caused by sin, redraws the borders created by people who have withdrawn from God, and enters into the most remote and abandoned places of the human condition."⁴⁰ Once Jesus' salvific work on earth was accomplished, the time came for him to "depart out of this world" and return to God.⁴¹

Beyond the spiritual nature of the *Verbum Dei's* migration, Jesus of Nazareth experienced the life of a migrant and refugee. Before Jesus had turned two years of age, his family had to flee to Egypt because of an impending infanticide that would come upon Bethlehem and the surrounding region.⁴² King Herod, in a fit of jealousy and rage, decided to kill all male children under two years of age because the magi had shared with him that the long awaited king had been born in Bethlehem. Matthew's Gospel even tells us that after Joseph had been told in a dream to flee to Egypt, "he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt."⁴³ Writing on the similarity between Jesus' escape and the violent conditions facing many refugees today, Carroll explains, "They left in haste after the angel's warning and probably took few possessions with them in order to be able to travel quickly and avoid Herod's troops ... The migration of this family locates the Jesus story within a movement that spans

⁴⁰ Groody, *Crossing the Divide*, 649.

⁴¹ John 13:3.

⁴² Matthew 2:13-18.

⁴³ Matthew 2:14.

history, of people desiring a better life or escaping the threat of death.”⁴⁴ Though only a small child, Jesus experienced firsthand the plight and flight of the refugee.

Many years later during his ministry, Jesus would tell a scribe that “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”⁴⁵ Jesus’ three years of itinerant teaching and healing were often filled with the trials of the migrant’s life – homelessness, hunger, rejection, ridicule. Not long before his passion, Jesus declared to his disciples, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”⁴⁶ Groody explains the significance of Jesus’ words and how Christ’s followers respond to them: “In the journey into otherness and vulnerability, the *Verbum Dei* enters into total identification with those who are abandoned and alienated The incarnation moves people beyond a narrow, self-serving identity into a greater identification with those considered “other” in society, particularly those like the migrants and refugees who are poor and marginalized.”⁴⁷ The migration of the Word of God, and his suffering which followed, not only secured the salvation of men but also revealed God’s identification with the immigrant and sojourner.

Missio Dei

To properly understand the gospel and the mission of God (*missio Dei*) one must interact with the Bible’s redemptive narrative. Mission is inextricably linked to

⁴⁴ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 105-6.

⁴⁵ Matthew 8:20.

⁴⁶ Matthew 25:35.

⁴⁷ Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 651-2.

Scripture. In fact, Christopher Wright boldly claims, “Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission.”⁴⁸ Over the past number of decades, many scholars have come to adopt this view of mission and the Bible.⁴⁹ For Keith Vanhoozer, “The theo-drama is essentially missional, the enactment of God’s several overtures to the world; for God’s communicative initiatives are first and foremost missionary movements.”⁵⁰ The story of the Bible is missional because God is missional.

The *missio Dei* has classically been understood as the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Spirit by the Father and Son. However, during the last half of the twentieth century, this idea was expanded by Karl Barth and others to include the sending of God’s people.⁵¹ For that reason I define the *missio Dei* as the initiative of God to redeem and restore creation through the sending of his Son, Spirit, and people for his glory. As it relates to a theology of migration, the word “sending” in this definition is significant. In both testaments of Scripture the movement of people and peoples is critical to the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan. In the Old Testament, this fact is most emblematic in the life of Abraham.

⁴⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 29.

⁴⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 398.

⁵⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 68-69.

⁵¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399.

Abraham

Abraham is first mentioned in Genesis 11:26 as the son of Terah. The verses which follow (Genesis 11:27-32) provide greater detail regarding Abraham's family and describe Abraham as an immigrant who traveled from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran.

Then, Genesis 12:1-3 records these words:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great a nation, and I will bless those who bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The blessing of the nations was predicated on Abraham's leaving Haran and going where Yahweh would show him.⁵² Charles van Engen writes, "Abraham would participate in God's mission to the nations as a response to his call to *leave his homeland* and his extended family clan and begin a pilgrimage to a new land that God would show him. God would bless the nations through Abram precisely through his being a *stranger, pilgrim, foreigner* and *immigrant* [italics mine]."⁵³ Abraham's calling and subsequent obedience reveal the indispensable role of migration in the *missio Dei*. Regarding the missional significance of this passage, Kostenberger and O'Brien write, "Genesis 12:1-3 is God's gracious response which reverses the sin and downward spiral of chapters 3-11. So dramatic and magnificent is this response that it is expressed in language similar to that of a new creation."⁵⁴ The promise that all the "families of the earth" would be

⁵² Wright, *The Mission of God*, 202.

⁵³ Charles van Engen, "Biblical Perspectives in the Role of Immigrants in God's Mission," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34 (2010): 35.

blessed in Abraham was a prophetic answer to the sin of man and fractured relationship between the peoples of the earth.

Even after Abraham arrived in the Promised Land his travels did not cease. Abraham's life would be so marked by migration that Moses would later call him a "wandering Aramean."⁵⁵ Sarita Gallagher points out that in the midst of these "wanderings" Abraham encountered many of the "families" of whom he was to bless: "During Abraham's lifetime, he lives among the Canaanites (Genesis 12:6-8), Egyptians (Genesis 12:10), Hittites and Amorites (Genesis 14:13), and the Philistines (Genesis 21:32-34). God in essence takes Abraham and his family to the nations."⁵⁶ The blessings which come to these nations are not what many contemporary Christian readers would expect. There are no gospel presentations, no service projects. Rather, there are material rewards presented to those who align with Abraham and physical punishment for those who stand against him.⁵⁷ In an Ancient Near Eastern world, this kind of engagement was "evangelistic" in its own right. The power of Yahweh was manifest through the favor he displayed in Abraham's life.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Andreas Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 28.

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 26:5.

⁵⁶ Sarita D. Gallagher, "Blessing on the Move: The Outpouring of God's Blessing through the Migrant Abraham," *Mission Studies* 30 (2013): 151.

⁵⁷ For an example see Genesis 14:1-24.

⁵⁸ See Genesis 21:22-24.

Israel

Abraham's migrations were not only instrumental in the *missio Dei*, they helped to form his identity and that of his descendants, the Hebrews. Abraham's son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, were also sojourners. Jacob's descendants lived in Egypt as refugees and eventually slaves for four hundred years.⁵⁹ Even when they were led toward the land of promise by Moses, Yahweh reminded Israel that once they possessed the land they were to live as resident aliens there as well.⁶⁰ When David prayed before a national assembly for the offerings dedicated to the building of the temple, he uttered, "For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were."⁶¹ A few generations later Israel would be forcibly exiled to foreign lands. In exile Israel once again experienced the life of the foreigner and immigrant – without support, limited in rights, unprotected, unsure of what the future held.⁶² In spite of the desperate situations in which Israel was often found, the *missio Dei* continued to be expressed through their migrations. The account of Nebuchadnezzar's worship of Yahweh⁶³ during the exile is demonstrable of how God used migration for his glory among the nations.

Israel was also called upon to manifest the *missio Dei* by the way it treated strangers and foreigners who entered its land. Christine Pohl describes this function of Israel's mission which was connected to its immigrant experience and identity:

⁵⁹ Genesis 15:13.

⁶⁰ Leviticus 25:23.

⁶¹ 1 Chronicles 29:15.

⁶² Lamentations 4-5.

⁶³ Daniel 4.

Israel's historical experience and spiritual identity as chosen-yet-alien, as guest in God's land, was a basis for gratitude and obedience, but this identity also served a more human purpose. It was the experiential framework out of which the Israelites were to care for the alien, marginal, and powerless persons in their midst. Israel's sense of vulnerability and dependence, captured in the condition of being an alien, helped the people of God imagine and remember the feelings of the aliens among them, and thus to love aliens and to provide for them.⁶⁴

Though personal hospitality of strangers was commonplace throughout the Ancient Near East, Israel was unique in that its society was governed by specific legislation regarding the protection of and provision for the resident alien. These laws included giving sojourners the right to work (Deuteronomy 24:14), the right to a Sabbath's rest (Deuteronomy 5:14), the right to glean the edges of fields (Leviticus 19:10), and equitable treatment in legal proceedings (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). As Leviticus 19:34 reads, Israel was to "treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Israel's laws and behavior toward other nations were meant to display the kindness and justice of Yahweh. The prophets often spoke of a time when the peoples of the earth would come to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁶⁵ That time would be more fully realized through the ministry of the church as they were sent among the peoples of the earth as missional migrants.

⁶⁴ Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission," *Missiology* 31, no. 1 (January 2003): 6.

⁶⁵ Psalm 22:27, 86:9; Isaiah 2:2, 25:6, 49:6, 56:7; Jeremiah 3:17; Daniel 7:14; Zephaniah 2:10, 3:9; Zechariah 8:23; Malachi 3:12.

The Church

Before his death, Jesus told his followers that he was sending them as the Father had sent him.⁶⁶ In fact, they were being sent to *panta ta ethne* ("all the nations") to make disciples.⁶⁷ They were to start in Jerusalem but eventually make their way to the "end of the earth."⁶⁸ As Jesus gave his disciples these commissions on several occasions, he made clear to them that they would continue his mission, the *missio Dei*, through migration. Through their obedience and in the power of the Spirit the church would be fulfilling the promise God had made to Abraham that in him "all the families of the earth would be blessed."⁶⁹ Christ had secured that blessing through his vicarious death and resurrection, but it was the faithful "children of Abraham"⁷⁰ who would be sent to offer it.

One of the first instances of the "sending" of the church occurred as a result of forced migration: "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were *scattered* throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles [*italics mine*]."⁷¹ Even though this migration was not purposed by the disciples, it was nonetheless part of God's redemptive plan. These Jerusalem believers were catapulted to Samaria, Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch to be witnesses of

⁶⁶ John 20:21.

⁶⁷ Matthew 28:19.

⁶⁸ Acts 1:8.

⁶⁹ Genesis 12:3.

⁷⁰ Galatians 3:7.

⁷¹ Acts 8:1.

the Messiah.⁷² The God of mission is also the God of migration. The Apostle Paul said that the Creator had “made from one man every man nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, *having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place*, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him [*italics mine*].”⁷³

From the church in Antioch, Paul, Barnabas and others migrated westward with the gospel. Paul’s three missionary journeys were initiated because a group of Christian refugees brought the gospel to Antioch and established a center for mission sending. Thorsten Prill notes that the church in Antioch became not only the sponsoring church “but also the model that [Paul and Barnabas] sought to replicate in other cities of the Roman Empire.”⁷⁴ Through the work of the apostles (“sent ones”) and the churches they established, migration and the *missio Dei* continued to display their interwoven relationship.

As the early church was spread abroad, its leaders reminded the fledgling group that like Israel before them, the church was called to live as an immigrant people. In the First Letter of Peter, the Apostle writes, “To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ... I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against the soul.”⁷⁵ Peter

⁷² Acts 11:19.

⁷³ Acts 17:26-27.

⁷⁴ Thorsten Prill, “Migration, Mission and the Multi-ethnic Church,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33 (2009): 337

⁷⁵ 1 Peter 1:1, 2:11.

connected the physical experience of being a *parepidemos* (“stranger” or “exile” from 1 Peter 1:1) with the spiritual pilgrimage they were to pursue in this world. Carroll finds in 1 Peter 2:11 a “foundational metaphor” for what it means to be a follower of Christ.⁷⁶ Commenting on how a theology of migration is integral to embodying these verses, van Engen writes:

I believe that when we begin to fully understand the Bible’s missiological and instrumental perspectives with regard to the *immigrant* and *stranger*, we may possibly gain a better grasp of, and live more fully into, the missionary vision expressed in 1 Peter 2. If the church of Jesus Christ truly saw itself as a *pilgrim community* whose land and nation are not of this earth, then the Christian church would begin to understand that it is itself a *community of immigrants* [italics mine].⁷⁷

The early church often expressed this “immigrant identity” through their practice and reception of hospitality.⁷⁸ As they fed the hungry, welcomed brothers and sisters into their homes or were received by “persons of peace” during their travels, the first century church spread the gospel and lived out the *missio Dei*.

Today, mission and migration continue to collide through the practice of hospitality. As the greatest migration in history continues, the nations and the global church increasingly arrive on the doorsteps of North American Christians. In *Strangers Next Door*⁷⁹, missiologist and pastor J.D. Payne explores how the church can respond to this wave of migration in light of the gospel. He notes that the immigrants living next

⁷⁶ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 118.

⁷⁷ Van Engen, “Biblical Perspectives in the Role of Immigrants in God’s Mission,” 43.

⁷⁸ Practice of hospitality: Hebrews 13:2; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 16:10-11; Titus 3:13-14. Reception of hospitality: Acts 16:14-15, 29-34; 18:1-3, 11; 28:30.

⁷⁹ J.D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012).

door may be here as refugees or university students, professionals or illegal aliens.

Regardless of how these new immigrants have arrived, the church has been called to demonstrate grace to them. That grace may be caring for their physical needs, sharing the good news or extending a hand of fellowship to brothers and sisters.

Though the opportunity to demonstrate biblical hospitality to migrants abounds in the American context, it, unfortunately, is too rare a practice among most Christians in the United States. Whether it is due to a lack of association with migrants in one's community, ignorance of the biblical call to show hospitality, or negative attitudes toward the immigrant community in general, American churches and their congregants are without excuse when they fail to offer hospitality to the stranger among them. This lack of engagement has often been revealed by the startling scarcity of international students who ever enter an American home during their studies in the United States.⁸⁰ For the American church to be faithful to the *missio Dei*, hospitality toward international students, refugees, asylees, migrant workers, and professional immigrants must become a more regular practice. Like the first century church, Western Christians need to have a comprehensive view of how migration and the *missio Dei* intersect.

Visio Dei

Jesus' first message was "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."⁸¹ The *Verbum Dei* was declaring that the *missio Dei*

⁸⁰ Douglas Shaw, "The Gospel and International Studies: Can We Make the Connection," *Lausanne World Pulse Archives*, May 2010, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives-php/1278/05-2010>.

⁸¹ Mark 1:15

was being fulfilled in him. God's gracious reign and rule were being extended to man through the Messiah; the *imago Dei* was being restored. This picture of God's kingdom come to earth has been described as the *visio Dei* – the vision of God. Though it has heavenly overtones, the *visio Dei* is intimately connected to Jesus' model prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven" [italics mine].⁸² The *visio Dei* is a vision of Christ's peace and reconciliation invading a world of chaos and division. With his kingdom message, Jesus was also offering "citizenship" (e.g. a new identity) to any who would turn from their worldly allegiances – those involving both personal sin and communal divisions – and receive his rule as Messiah and identify with a new community. In this way, humanity could be united as one people under one head. The ethics of this new society were in conflict with the ways of the world. Jesus taught that "many of the values and metrics people employ to measure others will be inverted and that the excluded will be given priority in the kingdom";⁸³ the first would become last⁸⁴ and the meek would inherit the earth.⁸⁵

This *visio Dei* ought to fundamentally inform the development of a theology of migration. The kingdom of God, far more than the kingdoms of man, should drive a Christian's values and positions related to the stranger and exile. Unfortunately, discussions related to migration are often devoid of any influence of the *visio Dei*. One's allegiance to their nation-state remains paramount to their allegiance to Christ's

⁸² Matthew 6:10.

⁸³ Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 661.

⁸⁴ Matthew 19:30.

⁸⁵ Matthew 5:5.

kingdom. Groody writes that the church should be concerned with how the *visio Dei* “takes root in human history, how it influences social transformation, and how it transfigures the way we understand migrants and refugees.”⁸⁶

Of all people, migrants stand in great need of kingdom citizens who will approximate the *visio Dei* through their efforts to bring peace and reconciliation to this world. In his discussion on Matthew 25:31-46, Groody explains that the places of vulnerability which Jesus lists are similar to the experiences of many migrants and refugees: “hungry in their homelands, thirsty in deserts they attempt to cross, naked after being robbed of their possessions, imprisoned in detention centers, sick in hospitals, and, if they make it to their destination, they are often estranged and marginalized.”⁸⁷ In this world often divided along ethnic and socioeconomic lines, immigrants need friends who will welcome them and advocates who will stand up for their rights. The church is being offered a unique opportunity to celebrate and champion the *imago Dei* among all people as they share the grace of the *Verbum Dei* among the nations in their midst. These expressions of the *missio Dei* will lead us to a greater experience of the *visio Dei* as we anticipate that day when Jesus will once again move from heaven to earth to be with his own.

⁸⁶ Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 660.

⁸⁷ Groody, “Crossing the Divide,” 663.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

When one surveys the literature specifically related to missional partnerships between African immigrant churches and majority-cultural churches in the West, he discovers that few have given attention to this growing opportunity. However, the one scholar previously referenced in this project who has provided a thoughtful treatment on this topic is historian Jehu Hanciles of Emory University. Hanciles' article "Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies,"¹ is indispensable to any study regarding the opportunity for missional partnership with African Christians in the West. Within his work Hanciles addresses the three most significant issues related to this kind of partnership: 1) migration from a biblical perspective, 2) African immigrant churches in the West, and 3) mission through partnership and hospitality. This literature review will examine the most relevant works within these three categories.

Migration from a Biblical Perspective

With the rise of immigration globally, Christian scholars and leaders are adding to the collection of works which consider migration and migrants from a biblical perspective. The books and articles in this section help readers wrestle with the theological and pastoral issues associated with migration. Though not commonly

¹ Jehu Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies," *Mission Studies* 30, no. 1 (2013): 64-85.

known, the biblical material has much to say about the role of Christians and the church in immigration.

Though this thesis-project is primarily concerned with African immigrants in the United States, most of the works in this section are written before the backdrop of Latin American immigration to the United States. A manuscript written from the African perspective would be a helpful addition. Jehu Hanciles has provided a chapter on migration from a biblical perspective in *Beyond Christendom*,² but a more lengthy treatment is needed.

Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible

In *Christians at the Border*, Daniel Carroll, Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, has provided one of the more thorough and recent treatments of migration from a biblical perspective. Carroll writes from both a scholarly and personal perspective, which is influenced by the Guatemalan heritage of his mother. Though his practical focus regarding immigration is centered upon Hispanic immigration, Carroll's exegesis in the pages of this book applies more generally to other migrant groups. Throughout *Christians at the Border*, the reader comes to see Carroll's emphasis upon the role of the church in the life of the alien and stranger. Though he believes Christians ought to be involved in helping shape immigration legislation, Carroll's call is for the church to love and care for immigrants regardless of their status.

After considering contemporary Hispanic immigration from a historical and sociological standpoint in Chapter 1, Carroll moves on in the next three chapters to

² See Chapter 6 of *Beyond Christendom*; cited later in this Literature Review.

unpacking the biblical material related to immigration. Chapters 2 and 3 are committed to the Old Testament material, while Chapter 4 looks at migration in the New Testament. In each of these chapters Carroll examines both immigration themes and specific practices regarding care for the stranger. He also stops at several points and provides a section which he titles "Implications for Today." These sections help the reader consider how ancient ideas and customs can be translated into our age. Carroll concludes *Christians at the Border* with a chapter entitled, "Where Do We Go from Here?" Readers will appreciate Carroll's blend of careful exegesis and realistic application.

The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible

Like Carroll, James Hoffmeier, Professor of Old Testament and Near Eastern Archaeology at Trinity International University, is able to write from both an academic and personal perspective regarding immigration. Hoffmeier, the son of missionaries, spent his first sixteen years in Egypt in a small village in which his family was the only foreigners. In *The Immigration Crisis*, Hoffmeier offers a thorough examination of the biblical material related to immigration. The vast majority of his work is confined to the Old Testament (six chapters), while only one chapter is given for the New Testament. Undoubtedly, this is due in large measure to the weight of migration texts found in the Old Testament.

Though there are similarities between Carroll's and Hoffmeier's exegesis, one point of departure is seen in Hoffmeier's insistence upon the rule of law. It is not that Hoffmeier is unsympathetic to the plight of illegal migrants. However, he believes that

illegal immigration is not only against God's command to follow the laws of civil authorities, but that it also undermines the attempts of others to migrate through the approved channels and processes.

"Biblical Perspectives on the Role of Immigrants in God's Mission"

Charles Van Engen, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology of Mission at Fuller Seminary, interacts with a considerable amount of biblical material in "Bible Perspectives on the Role of Immigrants in God's Mission." He carries out his analysis through two main divisions within the article. In the first, Van Engen describes four significant perspectives the Bible offers regarding the stranger and alien. He gives the most attention to the fourth perspective which views the immigrant through the lens of God's mission. Like others, Van Engen gives special attention to the life of Abraham and the identity of the people of Israel. In the second (and lengthier) section of his article, Van Engen examines the role of the immigrant in relation to the "motivations, agents, means, and goals of the mission of God to the nations." After exploring how biblical migrants played a role in each of these missiological categories, Van Engen offers some possibilities and poses some questions for how that role could be played out among migrants today. He concludes his article by describing how much of the biblical material related to migrants and mission converges in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

"Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees"

In "Crossing the Divide," Daniel Groody, Associate Professor of Theology and the Director of Immigration Initiatives at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of

Notre Dame, offers readers an intriguing theology of migration. Rather than exegeting individual texts related to migration, Groody explains four foundational theological elements which are essential to rightly understanding migration from a biblical perspective. Those four foundations are: 1) Imago Dei: Crossing the Problem-Person Divide, 2) Verbum Dei: Crossing the Divine-Human Divide, 3) Missio Dei: Crossing the Human-Human Divide, and 4) Visio Dei: Crossing the Country-Kingdom Divide. These elements provided the construct for the biblical/theological chapter of this thesis-project. Many Protestant readers will find the Catholic lens through which Groody writes both unique and refreshing.

Beyond “Crossing the Divide,” Groody has also penned a more extensive work entitled *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit*. In *Border of Death*, Groody deeply delves into the spiritual, theological, and pastoral issues related to Mexican immigration into the United States. *Border of Death* should be of particular importance to those desiring to minister to or alongside Latin American immigrants.

Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate

Welcoming the Stranger is not so much a work of exegesis as it is a biblically informed and inspired analysis of the issues surrounding immigration. Hwang and Soerens’s work covers topics ranging from the history of immigration in the United States to current immigration policies to the role of the church in the life of the immigrant. Thus *Welcoming the Stranger* is an excellent introductory resource for those interested in the multifaceted world of immigration. It is worth noting that Hwang and

Soerens both served with World Relief (a global ministry which focuses upon refugee resettlement in the United States) when they wrote the book.

African Immigrant Churches in the West

Several groups of scholars, including anthropologists, sociologists, theologians, and missiologists have demonstrated interest in immigrant religion and immigrant congregations in the West. The first three works in this section are either written by or co-edited by African immigrants. Their personal perspective regarding African immigrant churches in the West is illuminating. A helpful addition to this group might include a work by an African immigrant pastor, as opposed to an African academician.

The last two books considered in this section were produced by respected sociologists and anthropologists. Their work is helpful to the study of immigrant religion in the West in general, but unfortunately, neither their evaluation nor their case studies include African immigrant churches specifically. In the future, the African immigrant church should not be overlooked when social scientists are researching immigrant religion in the United States.

Beyond Christendom: Globalization, Migration, and the Transformation of the West

Beyond Christendom is Hanciles' most extensive work on African immigrant Christianity. He dedicates four of its fifteen chapters (12-15) to describing and examining African immigrant congregations. In Chapter 12, Hanciles provides an overview of how successive waves of immigration have impacted America's religious landscape. Specifically, he seeks to provide evidence for the missiological implications

of immigrant churches upon the broader Christian community within the United States. Possibly the most important statement in the chapter is found in these words: "It is one of the most striking coincidences of contemporary globalization that the decline of the Christian faith in North America has corresponded with a phenomenal influx of Christian migrants."³ In Chapter 13, Hanciles desires to set apart America's post-1965 African immigrants from those who arrived on its shores during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This chapter is helpful for two reasons. First, it provides valuable census data related to African immigrants to the United States. Second, it explains some of the tensions which exist between African-Americans and post-1965 African immigrants in the United States. In Chapter 14, the reader is given more insight into the various types of African immigrant churches (Abrahamic, Macedonian, Jerusalem, Samuel-Eli). Hanciles also shares the stories of three African immigrant pastors who have immigrated from Liberia, Nigeria, and Congo, respectively. In Chapter 15, the author concludes his treatment of African immigrant congregations by considering their missional effectiveness in light of their missional challenge.

African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe

African Christian Presence in the West is the most helpful volume dedicated to African immigrant religion currently available. Though it is not primarily dedicated to the issue of partnership and interaction with majority churches, *African Christian Presence in the West* does tackle a wide range of issues related to the particulars of the

³ Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 285.

Christian African immigrant experience. The volume's two editors currently teach in Germany and Ghana, respectively, but they have each had held academic positions in the United States as well. In addition, the work's contributors have interacted with the issues personally and academically in African, European and American contexts. Several chapters deserve particular attention in light of the scope of this thesis-project. Ogbu Kalu's chapter entitled "The Anatomy of Reverse Flow in African Christianity: Pentecostalism and Immigrant African Christianity" provides a historical and sociological analysis of the recent history of movement of African Christians from the global South to the North (West). Kalu was Professor of World Christianity and Missions at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Originally from Nigeria, Kalu was one of the most influential African theologians and missiologists.

Part II of *African Christian Presence in the West*, comprising Chapters 5-10, provides six case studies of African immigrant congregations in North America. Of particular note is Asamoah-Gyadu's chapter centered upon a Ghanaian denomination's mission in the United States. In Chapter 13 Mark Granquist offers a succinct overview of the immigration of African Christians to the United States post-1965. He provides a comparison of the factors influencing this group to those of other immigrant groups, especially nineteenth century European immigrants. Part V, including Chapters 20-23, focuses on theological aspects related to African immigrants in the West. One should not bypass Andrew Walls' chapter entitled, "Towards a Theology of Migration." Frieder and Asamoah-Gyadu have done a great service for students of the African Christian Diaspora in the West.

African Immigrant Religions in America

Olupona and Gemignani's insightful resource examines the "place" of African immigrant churches in the American context. Most of the chapters are written by scholars who also happen to be African immigrants. Their experience and relevant research provides insight into various aspects of the African immigrant church. Jacob Olupona is Professor of African Religious Traditions at Harvard Divinity School where his most recent research has been focused on the religious practices of African immigrants in the United States.

The book is divided into four sections, with the second section being most relevant to the questions raised in this thesis-project. Section Two is entitled "Reverse Mission: Faith, Practice and the Immigrant Journey" and its two chapters consider two main topics: the effect of the Diaspora upon African immigrant churches and the missional impulse active within them. In chapter four, Akintunde Akinade writes, "I believe that the formidable presence of immigrant churches constitutes a *kairos* moment for American Christianity. Christian communities formerly served by Western missions and now proclaiming the good news and introducing a new grammar of faith to the West" (93). Do majority church leaders also view the influx of immigrant churches as a *kairos* moment? That is a question which has yet to be fully answered. *African Immigrant Religions in America* will assist those majority culture churches who do consider the opportunity to build bridges of friendship (and potentially partnership) with African immigrant churches.

Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious life in America

Immigrant Faiths takes a broad look at the changing religious landscape of America in light of an influx of diverse traditions among immigrants. Though the editors do not specifically treat the growing phenomenon of the African immigrant church, Leonard's introduction and Stepick's general first chapter are helpful to readers interested in the learning more about the role of religion in the life of immigrants to the United States. They are adamant that America is becoming a more religious society due to the participation of immigrants within it. Leonard is Professor of Anthropology at University of California – Irvine where her research is focused upon Muslims in the United States. Stepick is Professor of Anthropology at Florida International University and directs the Immigration and Ethnicity Institute.

Stepick's chapter entitled "God is Apparently Not Dead" lays out several foundational observations of America's new immigrants and their connection to religion. Stepick mentions issues related transnational interaction, identity formation, gender roles, generational differences and civic engagement. Having a grasp of these issues is critical to faithful engagement with immigrant populations.

Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations

Religion and the New Immigrants is similar to *Immigrant Faiths* in that they were both written by social scientists; the former edited by a pair of sociologists and the latter written by a group of anthropologists. *Religion and the New Immigrants* follows the standard pattern of sociological study by offering a significant number of case

studies involving immigrants and their faith experiences. Unfortunately, those case studies do not include African immigrant churches. Where Ebaugh and Chafetz's work is valuable in the context of this paper is in its final section which deals with thematic issues related to immigrants' religious experience. One portion of this section, which may be unique in the related material, centers on the role of "minority/majority status" and evangelism. *Religion and the New Immigrants* also delve into issues related to congregation governance, gender roles, social services, ethnicity and language. Ebaugh is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at University of Houston. One of her specialties is the sociology of religion. Chafetz was a Professor of Sociology at University of Houston.

Mission through Partnership and Hospitality

As immigration increasingly affects the missional landscape within the United States, pastors and scholars are beginning to consider how the American church should work with immigrant congregations to reach the nations among them. This section examines a broad range of material related to that question.

"Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in the West."

Hanciles laments that much of the conversation regarding immigration in the United States is focused on illegal immigration from America's southern neighbors. Americans seem oblivious to the immigration of other non-Latino peoples. Especially disheartening to Hanciles is the American church's ignorance of this growing number of African Christian immigrants who are in their midst. This lack of engagement has led to feelings of marginalization and disenfranchisement among many African Christians in

the United States. Some African Christians feel like “strangers” among their American brothers and sisters.

The reasons for this lack of interaction are manifold, says Hanciles. However, he shares five factors that are most obvious to him: 1) Paternalism and Condescension, 2) The Perception of African Immigrants as Needy and Dependent, 3) Entrenched Perception of Africans as Objects of Mission, 4) Theological Difference and Spiritual Dissonance, and 5) A Segmented Religious Landscape. Though Hanciles is negative in his analysis of the current situation, he is hopeful that new relationships between congregations can be forged. This hope is driven by his reading of Acts 6 and the intercultural cooperation which took place for the service of poor widows.

Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission

Friendship at the Margins is noteworthy not because it is specifically centered upon relationships between African and American Christians but because it casts a vision for intentional relational engagement between those in the “center” and those on the “margins.” The book is part of a series produced by the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School whose founders happen to be an African (Emmanuel Katongole) and a white American (Chris Rice). *Friendship at the Margins* is full of personal stories by Heuertz and Pohl from their decades of experience in building friendships with often-forgotten people and communities. Heuertz is a mission leader who served among the global poor with Word Made Flesh. Pohl is Professor of Church in Society at Asbury Theological Seminary.

The two chapters which are most helpful to this study are “Mutuality in Mission” (Chapter 3) and “A Spirituality Fit for the Margins” (Chapter 5). Chapter 3 helps readers see the contagious faith which many at the “margins” bring to relationships connected by Christ and mission. Chapter 5 lays out the kind of character and behavior which needs to be displayed by those at the “center” when engaging those at the “margins” in missional friendships. Those interested in forming relationships with the African immigrant church will do well to consider the encouragement of Heuertz and Pohl.

New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission

In *New Testament Hospitality* John Koenig, Professor Emeritus of New Testament at The General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, defines hospitality as “the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the gospel.”⁴ This definition is incredibly insightful to the topic of friendship between the majority-culture American church and immigrant congregations. Most people view hospitality as a uni-directional activity. In Koenig’s evaluation of hospitality in the New Testament, he finds an enterprise that is often connected to partnership in mission and characterized by mutual blessing. Each of the book’s five chapters should be studied and considered, however, Koenig’s analysis of hospitality in the Lukan material in Chapter 4 is of particular note. Koenig finds in Luke an emphasis upon the use of hospitality in the development of relationships between resident and non-resident Christians. Though the non-residents in Koenig’s analysis are often itinerant missionaries, it is important to

⁴ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 10.

remember that African immigrant believers often view their movement to the West in the context of mission.

“Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission”

Though the title of Pohl’s article seems better placed in the biblical section of this literature review, the content of “Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission” is primarily centered upon the role of hospitality at the intersection of migration and mission. Pohl’s exegesis of passages related to the “alien” identity of Israel and the practice of hospitality in the early church are for the purpose of helping the church apply biblical patterns and practices to the work of welcoming the stranger today.

She demonstrates that intention by offering six “missiological implications” related to her overview of biblical and historical material. Those implications are: 1) Care for migrants and refugees should be central to the Christian life and mission, 2) The biblical accounts demonstrate a priority of offering hospitality to the stranger, 3) Hospitality is one of the most significant ways to breakdown walls of division in our world, 4) Hospitality should be understood as a way of life rather than a strategy, 5) Hospitality integrates church, mission, and social justice, and 6) As hospitality is given, liminality must be pursued. Each of Pohl’s “missional implications” ought to be seriously considered. Special attention should be given to the second implication in which she explains the missional role of migrants to whom one is demonstrating hospitality.

Another work by Pohl which provides a more lengthy treatment of the role of hospitality is *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. *Making*

Room not only offers a biblical and historical evaluation of the practice of hospitality within the church, but it also considers the ways in which hospitality can be provided in contemporary society. Pohl's three decades of work with refugees and the poor comes through in wisdom and practical insight.

"Migration, Mission and the Multi-ethnic Church"

"Migration, Mission, and the Multi-ethnic Church" provides an uncommon look at the role of missional partnership across ethnic lines at the local church level. Prill, Lecturer in Missiology and Practical Theology at Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary, begins his article with an analysis of the multi-ethnic characteristics of the churches at Jerusalem, Antioch and Philippi. He discovers that the ethnic diversity present within these churches was not a hindrance to mission but rather may have actually spurred the groups on to greater missional enterprise. Prill also provides six "principles of integration" related to merging migrant congregation into the mission of local churches. Those six principles are worth noting: The Congregation within a Congregation, Unity, Equality, Non-assimilation and Mutuality, Mixed Leadership, and Mixed-Ministry Teams. Encouraging to readers is the fact that Prill has had to live out these principles as the pastor of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church in England.

Our Global Families: Christians Embracing a Common Identity in a Changing World

Johnson and Wu's *Our Global Families* is not a work about migrants or immigrant congregations or even hospitality necessarily. Rather, its importance to this study is found in its call for Christians everywhere, but especially those of the North Atlantic, to

embrace our “global family” called the church and our “global family” called humanity.

Todd Johnson is Associate Professor of Global Christianity and the Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Johnson also serves as editor of the World Christian Database. Cindy Wu is a freelance writer who has served in a number of cross-cultural settings.

Each of the book’s four sections deals with material that is essential for Christians who are building bridges with immigrant congregations in their community who not only possess ethnic differences but also cultural and theological distinctiveness from majority culture churches. Parts 1 and 2 introduce the reader to the increasingly diverse and scattered global Christian family. Parts 2 and 3 highlight and emphasize the commonalities which Christianity possesses across its “multi-everything” family. The call to unity expressed in Part 3 is driven by the John 17 prayer of Jesus, which still echoes today. Part 4 is helpful in that it considers the possibilities and limits of our engagement with the world. The hopeful humility demonstrated in the final section is representative of the attitude one must hold in their missional pursuits, especially those of a cross-cultural nature. As more and more Christians seek to live simultaneously as global citizens of this world and servant citizens of Christ’s kingdom, *Our Global Families* will prove to be an invaluable resource.

Western Christians in Global Mission: What’s the Role of the North American Church

Like Johnson and Wu in *Our Global Families*, Borthwick in *Western Christians in Global Mission* desires to change the assumptions of the North American Church regarding its role with the rest of the world, including its relationship with Christianity in

the Majority World. Though Borthwick is primarily concerned with relationships “over there,” much of what he offers is applicable to the American context as well. In Part 1 of the book, Borthwick provides an “appraisal” of North American Church and the Majority World Church in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. Borthwick, a savvy missions practitioner and strategist who serves as an Adjunct Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Senior Consultant for Development Associates International, has an eye for identifying strengths and weaknesses in both groups. His candid and respectful analysis in these two chapters should not be missed by the Christian interested in partnership with the global church. In Part 2, Borthwick offers seven principles to guide American Christians in its engagement with the church of the Majority World. Those principles include: biblical continuity, humility, reciprocity, sacrifice, partnership equality, listening, and unity. Though pieces of the material supporting the seven principles can be found elsewhere, no one equals the thoughtful and thorough treatment which Borthwick gives in *Western Christians in Global Mission*.

Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice

Enoch Wan, Professor of Intercultural Studies at Western Seminary and current President of the Evangelical Missiological Society, is one of the foremost scholars on Diaspora missiology. Therefore, his *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* serves as a bible of sorts for those interested in mission through scattered peoples around the world (*Diaspora Missions* is 362 pages long and reads as much like a textbook as any other source in this literature review). Wan creates a taxonomy for Diaspora missions that illustrates the ways in which God’s redemptive purposes are at

work in the movement of people groups. The three types of Diaspora missions he identifies are: missions to the Diaspora, missions through the Diaspora, and missions by and beyond the Diaspora. Each of these three types of missions (as well as Diaspora ministry which Wan distinguishes from Diaspora missions) can possibly be at work in congregational partnerships between immigrant congregations and those of the host culture.

Diaspora Missiology is divided into parts which cover theory, methodology and practice. The theory section looks at Diaspora through a historical, biblical and missiological lens. Chapter 6 of that section, entitled, "Diaspora and Relocation as Witness as Divine Impetus for Witness in the Early Church," reveals how God's sovereignty in the movement of peoples is connected with his missional purposes of bringing the gospel to all nations. Grasping this biblical theme is crucial to the building of reciprocity between congregational partners, when one of those partners happens to be an immigrant church. The methodology section illustrates how Diaspora missions has changed cross-cultural mission endeavors. Wan provides a very insightful chart of page 99 which depicts the differences between traditional missiology and diaspora missiology. Before his conclusion, Wan offers a practical section that is filled with principles and case studies that will greatly aid those engaged in congregational partnerships at the intersection of migration and mission.

Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission

Strangers Next Door is primarily concerned with helping believers see the evangelistic and disciple-making opportunities which exist among the various peoples

who have immigrated to the United States. Writing from a missiological perspective, Payne informs his readers about the growing numbers of unreached people groups who can be counted among the refugees, international students, and professional immigrants living “next door” to the average American Christian. *Strangers Next Door* is very well organized and researched. Payne, who now serves as Pastor of Church Multiplication at The Church at Brook Hills, provides readers with stories, statistics, and practical applications regarding mission to immigrant groups. In the final two chapters of *Strangers Next Door*, Payne encourages churches to consider partnerships with immigrant Christians from the Majority World as they engage the nations among them with the gospel.

The works considered in this Literature Review reflect the best material related to understanding congregational partnerships between African immigrant congregations and majority-culture churches. Though the issues surrounding these partnerships have been expounded on by many, the number of sources which directly deal with the missional partnerships themselves (especially those concerning partnerships with African immigrant churches) is lacking. One reason for the scarcity of this material is the fact that there is a scarcity of partnerships. Hopefully, as the number of partnerships grows there will be an increase in the number of works penned. One resource of particular importance would be a book co-written by an African immigrant pastor and a majority-culture pastor who have both engaged in these partnerships.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

This thesis-project is primarily concerned with increasing the number of partnerships which exist between immigrant congregations and majority culture churches in the United States. This desire is driven by the missiological opportunities which exist through these partnerships. The context of partnership in which the author is most interested is between African immigrant congregations and predominantly white Evangelical churches. For local, cross-cultural congregational partnerships to become more commonplace two elements would be beneficial: 1) a robust theology of migration, and 2) healthy models of partnership. In Chapter 2, this thesis-project presented a well developed theology of migration. This chapter will present a plan of research which will allow for evaluation of existing partnerships between immigrant congregations and majority culture churches. The goal of this research is to offer some best practices and healthy models of partnership.

Semi-structured Interviews

The project portion of this thesis-project will be conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews. As a tool of research, the semi-structured interview provides the researcher with the opportunity to not only collect information related to the research topic but also to interact with the subjects of that research in a way that is not possible through a survey. Though the researcher will prepare a list of questions in advance of the interview (an 'interview guide'), he or she can also divert from these

questions and pursue other questions that are relevant to the research. Though still considered a formal research method, semi-structured interviews often put the researcher and informant in a more casual position that encourages the informant to express their opinion more openly. This freedom is also developed through the use of open-ended questions, as informants are asked to share about their experience. Semi-structured interviews often produce a wealth of reliable, comparable qualitative data.¹

It should be noted that other methods of research, such as a formal survey or questionnaire, could have been employed in this thesis-project. The data collected from those methods may have been more limiting in scope, due to the lack of an interviewer being able to ask follow-up questions, but could have been more helpful in producing a higher level of comparable data. Concerning which method a researcher should choose, H.W. Smith writes, "Choice of methods should depend on the theoretical problem under consideration."² Since the "theoretical problem" being considered in this thesis-project involved the evaluation of certain factors on the part of the respondent, a method which allowed for conversation and immediate clarification was advantageous.

The semi-structured interview method was also selected for use in this thesis-project because of the author's prior observation of and experience with partnerships between African immigrant congregations and major-culture churches. This afforded me the opportunity to ask open-ended and follow-up questions which require a certain measure of experience in the subject matter at hand. Over the past five years of

¹ Steiner Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 5-10.

² H.W. Smith, *Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), 351-370.

pastoral ministry at Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas I have had substantial interaction with our African refugee congregation. In fact, I have been the primary staff contact with their leadership and congregation. Through this position I have grown in my understanding of the African church and in my appreciation for our partnership. I have also developed friendships with leaders in other majority-culture churches who are in partnership with African immigrant churches. These observations and relationships allowed the researcher to ask questions which are more relevant to the research topic and the individual experiences of the informants.

The Interview Guides

For the purposes of this research, two interview guides were prepared for the semi-structured interviews.³ The first interview guide was for the leaders of African immigrant congregations in partnership with majority-culture churches. The second interview guide was for majority-culture pastors in partnership with African immigrant congregations. Below are the questions involved in the two interview guides.

African Church Leader's Interview Guide

1. Tell me about yourself:
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. Tell me about your family.
 - c. Where are you originally from?
 - d. How long have you been in the United States?

³ For an example of an interview guide and for some general instructions related to the interviews see H.W. Smith, *Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), 351-370.

- e. What is your position in this church?
 - f. How long have you served in this position?
2. Tell me about your church:
 - a. When did your church first organize?
 - b. How long have you been meeting here?
 - c. What nationalities and ethnicities are represented in your church?
 - d. How many people attend your church?
 3. When did your church begin a partnership with a majority-culture church?
 4. Why did you desire a partnership with a majority-culture church?
 5. How did you pursue that partnership?
 6. What led you to choose this church with which to partner?
 7. What has that partnership included since it began?
 8. How would you describe the partnership today?
 9. How has the partnership evolved over time?
 10. What has been the most significant contribution of the majority-culture church to your congregation?
 11. What would you change about the partnership?
 12. Questions connected to Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of Partnership⁴?

⁴ Jehu Hanciles is considered a leading scholar in the area of African immigrant churches in the West. Hanciles laments that there is so little interaction between African immigrant churches and majority-culture churches. In "Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies," [*Mission Studies* 30, no. 1 (2013): 64-85] Hanciles suggests there are five factors which limit these cross-cultural partnerships in the United States. I have chosen to include questions related to these factors to determine how the partnerships interviewed have dealt with them.

- a. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?
 - i. How so?
 - b. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?
 - i. How so?
 - c. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?
 - i. How so?
 - d. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?
 - i. If so, what?
 - e. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?
 - i. Is so, what?
13. What would you say to other church leaders (both African and majority culture) who are considering this kind of partnership?

Majority-Culture Church Leader's Interview Guide

- 1. Tell me about yourself:
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. What is your position in this church?
 - c. How long have you served in this position?

- d. What is your particular responsibility regarding the African immigrant congregation with which your church partners?
2. Tell me about your church:
 - a. What denomination is your church?
 - b. What is the average Sunday attendance?
 - c. How would you describe the racial and socioeconomic status of the majority of your church members?
3. When did your church begin a partnership with an African immigrant church?
4. How did that partnership begin?
5. What led you to be open to that partnership?
6. What has that partnership included since it began?
7. How would you describe the partnership today?
8. How has the partnership evolved over time?
9. What has been the most significant contribution of the African immigrant church to your congregation?
10. What would you change about the partnership?
11. Questions connected to Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of Partnership?
 - a. How have you sought to limit paternalism or condescension toward the immigrant church?
 - i. How would you like to grow in this area?
 - b. How have you sought to treat them as a 'contributing group' instead of a 'needy group' regarding the partnership?

- i. How would you like to grow in this area?
 - c. How have you treated them as a 'partner' in mission as opposed to an 'object' of mission?
 - i. How would you like to grow in this area?
 - d. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?
 - i. If so, what?
 - e. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?
 - i. Is so, what?
12. What would you say to other church leaders (both African and majority culture) who are considering this kind of partnership?

Congregational Partnerships Interviewed

There were four congregational partnerships interviewed for the purposes of this thesis-project. These partnerships were not chosen randomly. To the contrary, these partnerships were selected based upon the researcher's prior interaction with at least one partner in the relationship. Each of the partnerships is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Each of the four majority-culture churches is a predominantly white congregation ranging socio-economically from middle income to wealthy. The four majority-culture churches would each be identified as Evangelical. Three of the four majority-culture churches are non-denominational churches in the "Bible Church" tradition; the fourth majority-culture church has historically been aligned with the

Presbyterian Church USA. Three of the four African immigrant churches are “refugee” congregations with parishioners primarily from the nations of Burundi, Congo, and Rwanda; the fourth African immigrant church consists of African international students and professional immigrants. What follows below is a fuller description of the partnerships which were interviewed as well as the results of those interviews.

Northwest Bible Church and African Missionary Fellowship⁵

In September 2007, Northwest Bible Church of Dallas, Texas welcomed a group of refugees from Burundi to begin meeting on their campus for worship services. This African refugee congregation had just been formed a few months prior. A Tanzanian student at Dallas Theological Seminary who was attending Northwest Bible Church came into contact with this group of refugees and learned of their desire for a place of worship. The student shared this desire with one of the pastors at Northwest Bible Church and a meeting was set up. After this group of refugees began meeting on the Northwest Bible Church campus, they established themselves as the African Missionary Fellowship. Today, they are a group of about 150. They are still mostly Burundian though there are some Congolese and Rwandans who worship with them. Their pastor, Paul Mbayeko, has served as their shepherding leader for the past six years. One of the members of their fellowship, Jean Congera, is employed by Northwest Bible Church as a Community Leader. In that position, Mr. Congera, who speaks fluent English, serves as

⁵ Two interviews were undertaken for this partnership. The first interview was conducted with two leaders of the African Missionary Fellowship, Mr. Jean Congera, a Committee Member, and Mr. Paul Mbayeko, Preaching Pastor, on Sunday November 15, 2015 in person. Mr. Congera served as the translator in this interview. The second interview was conducted with Mr. Brian Newby, Lead Outreach Minister at Northwest Bible Church, on Thursday December 10, 2015 via phone.

the primary liaison between the two congregations and serves the broader refugee community near Northwest Bible Church.

Over the past eight years, Northwest Bible Church has offered the African Missionary Fellowship the following benefits through the partnership: 1) use of facilities, 2) material support of families in need, 3) conflict resolution, 4) transportation services through the use of church vans, 5) an apartment unit in a complex where many of the African once lived, 6) English as a Second Language classes, 7) financial support of ministry events and programs, and 8) financial accountability. Some of these benefits have been in place since the beginning of the partnership. Others have been extended when necessary. When asked which of these benefits has been the greatest contribution, the leaders of the African Missionary Fellowship quickly note the use of facilities which provides them a place to worship.

The leaders of the African Missionary Fellowship view their partnership with Northwest Bible Church as being healthy. When asked if they would change anything about the partnership, they mentioned two things: 1) financial compensation for the African Missionary Fellowship pastor, and 2) deeper pastoral training. Below are their answers from the interview which dealt with Jehu Hanciles' limiting factors in congregational partnerships.

1. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?

"Northwest Bible Church has done a great job in this regard. They are wise and usually only step into the affairs of the African Missionary Fellowship when they are invited to do so."

2. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?

"Northwest Bible Church has used an Aid-Empower-Invite Strategy which has worked well. We are currently in the Empower stage. One example of this is a recent contribution of \$3,500 from the African Missionary Fellowship to a church-wide refugee outreach which Northwest Bible Church has initiated. This outreach helped 11 families, all of whom were outside of our congregation."

3. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?

"The outreach which we just mentioned demonstrates how they are increasingly seeing us as partners in mission. This has been the greatest area of growth in our partnership."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

"There have not been any significant differences. Anytime there has been a minor difference, grace has been extended. The one minor difference is that Northwest Bible Church is cessationist. We are not. Early in our partnership, Northwest Bible Church's doctrinal statement was translated into Kirundi. This was very helpful."

5. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

"The two most significant cultural differences are clothing and understanding of time. Regarding clothing, African women are more modest than American women. Regarding

time, we are getting better at adjusting to American expectations regarding punctuality.”

When asked what they would say to other church leaders considering a congregational partnership, the leaders of the African Missionary Fellowship encouraged those leaders to emphasize patience and grace in their partnership. Brian Newby, Lead Outreach Minister at Northwest Bible Church for the past five years, affirmed the need for these two qualities in cross-cultural congregational partnerships. Newby said church leaders in these partnerships have to “embrace the messy-ness” involved because “it’s worth it.” He believes this happens when the two churches see each other through the lens of the gospel; when we begin to accept one another through the grace of Christ.

Northwest Bible Church, an affluent, predominantly white congregation of some 2,200 members, has several ethnic congregations that worship on their campus and that partner with them in ministry. Newby credits their engagement with these congregations to the strong missional impulse that runs through their culture. This starts with their Senior Pastor, Neil Tomba, who spends time personally with the leaders of the ethnic congregations with whom they partner. Tomba led Northwest Bible Church to welcome the African Missionary Fellowship and other ethnic congregations after refugee groups from around the world began to resettle in their community about ten years ago.

When asked how he would describe Northwest Bible Church’s partnership with the African Missionary Fellowship, Newby used the hyphenated “healthy-messy.” He

explained that the two churches are in a great place relationally. They have good dialogue and interact with each other more than ever. That's the healthy part. The messy part describes interaction between two groups that are so different. Newby noted that Jean Congera who serves on the Northwest Bible Church staff but who is also a leader within the African Missionary Fellowship has been an invaluable guide through the messy-ness.

Newby gave the following answers to the questions related to Hanciles Five Limiting Factors of Congregational Partnerships:

1. How have you sought to limit paternalism and condescension toward the immigrant church partner?

"We have sought relationship first. It has been our highest priority in the partnership. We have also desired for the African Missionary Fellowship to make decisions on their own."

2. How have you sought to treat them as a 'contributing group' instead of the 'needy group' within the partnership?

"First, we have tried to help the African Missionary Fellowship see themselves as contributors. Unfortunately, refugees have significant need and do not always seem themselves as contributors."

3. How have you treated them as a 'partner' in mission as opposed to an 'object' of mission?

“We recently worked with them on a project to serve other refugee groups. The African Missionary Fellowship were substantially involves as partners.”

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

“No major differences. We realize there are minor differences including our understandings of the sign gifts.”

5. Have there been any significant culture differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

“Yes – language, issues related to time, power dynamics.”

Christ Chapel Bible Church and Swahili Fellowship⁶

In 2011, a Congolese refugee who had been attending Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas asked permission to begin a Swahili-language worship service on their campus. Christ Chapel Bible Church, who had prided itself as a “church without walls,” eventually decided to give this gentleman the opportunity he desired. Within a few weeks, Congolese families began showing up on Sunday afternoons for the Swahili Fellowship. In the early days, the Swahili Fellowship did not have a pastor but instead had a committee of men who gave leadership to the congregation. Unfortunately, this leadership structure was highly fractious. After a little more than a year of meeting the

⁶ Three interviews were undertaken for this partnership. The first interview was conducted with Mr. Wesley Toland, Local Outreach Associate Director at Christ Chapel Bible Church, on Tuesday November 17, 2015 in person. The second interview was conducted with Mr. Lance Cashion, Local Outreach Director at Christ Chapel Bible Church, on Wednesday November 18, 2015 in person. The third interview was conducted with Mr. Justin “J.J.” Kiwovele, Lead Pastor of the Swahili Fellowship at Christ Chapel Bible Church, on Saturday December 12, 2015 via phone.

Swahili Fellowship was struggling to survive. Those who were committed to the health and future of the congregation asked the leaders of Christ Chapel Bible Church to help them search for a pastor. In October 2012, Justin “J.J.” Kiwovele was called to serve as their pastor. At that time, the Swahili Fellowship became a ministry of Christ Chapel Bible Church and began to be called the Swahili Service. Today, the Swahili Service consists of some seventy-five individuals who are predominantly refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Swahili Service’s partnership with Christ Chapel Bible Church has included the following: 1) A worship location on the campus of Christ Chapel Bible Church, 2) financial resources for ministry needs and benevolence, 3) transportation services, including the use of church vans, 4) English as a Second Language classes, 5) family friendships, and 6) opportunity for full membership into Christ Chapel Bible Church. Kiwovele believes the greatest benefits his congregation has received from Christ Chapel Bible Church include: 1) financial resources, 2) a place to worship, 3) spiritual formation, and 4) organizational leadership. He appreciates the way his congregation is treated as brothers and sisters in Christ. Kiwovele feels that there is a strong Kingdom focus at Christ Chapel Bible Church that encourages those who participate in the Swahili Service. He does sometimes desire that each partner had a better understanding of each other’s culture but he recognizes there are limits to this in cross-cultural interaction. When asked questions related to Hanciles Five Factors Limiting Congregational Partnerships Kiwovele gave the following answers:

1. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?

"Christ Chapel has done much to incorporate us into their body. We are one of the worship services of the church. Those who worship with us are encouraged to become full voting members of Christ Chapel. We celebrate communion together. Paternalism has not been a significant issue."

2. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?

"They have treated us like a 'contributing group' in a number of ways. First, all of our giving goes into the same pot. Second, there have been several occasions when our youth have made an intentional effort of joining in one of their events or outreaches. We are always invited to join in."

3. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?

"They have treated us partners. This has been seen by the way we give to common ministries and serve together."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

"The only significant theological differences have occurred at the individual level, never at the congregational level. Our congregation is made up of individuals from different denominational backgrounds."

5. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

“The largest culture difference which we have felt most often involves the way we do church. Our services are longer and we seek to involve everyone in the service. This more communal approach is definitely different from Christ Chapel.”

Kiwovele believes these congregational partnerships are right in line with the mission of God. He thinks other pastors should be encouraged by the Kingdom vision of Revelation 7:9 which speaks of the common worship of Christ of all peoples and tongues in the age to come. Since the Lord uses migration for his missional purposes, church leaders in the United States should desire to build friendships with immigrant congregations and their leaders. Lance Cashion and Wesley Toland, who serve as Christ Chapel Bible Church’s Local Outreach Director and Local Outreach Associate Director, respectively, agree with Kiwovele’s encouragement. Toland mentioned that there is a biblical mandate to welcome both the stranger and our brother. He also believes the cultural diversity which the Swahili Service has fostered within their church has been helpful. Cashion said that pastors should pursue these partnerships as they are called by God.

Both Cashion and Toland view the partnership as a healthy one. Their common friendship with Kiwovele is one of the highlights of having the Swahili Service on their campus. They both credit his solid leadership as the primary factor in the vitality of the Swahili Service and its engagement with Christ Chapel Bible Church. They believe that through this partnership their upper middle-class, predominantly white church of 5,000

has had their eyes opened to just how big Christ's church is. In the future, Cashion and Toland would like to see even more integration between the Swahili Service and their congregation. When asked about how their church has worked through issues related to Hanciles Five Limiting Factors of Congregational Partnerships they gave the following answers:

1. How have you sought to limit paternalism and condescension toward the immigrant church partner?

Toland : "We have sought to limit paternalism by fostering mutuality in decision making with J.J. In addition, we placed J.J. into a staff position at Christ Chapel demonstrating our desire to treat the Swahili Service as an equal. Their congregation is open to membership within our church and one of their members serves as a deacon within our church."

Cashion: "We treat them the same as any other ministry in the church. They have a great deal of autonomy in their worship service."

2. How have you sought to treat them as a 'contributing group' instead of the 'needy group' within the partnership?

Toland: "We have increasingly sought to treat the Swahili Service as contributors. Not only do they give tithes and offerings but they have served with us in some ministries. This is an area in which we still desire growth."

Cashion: "The fact that we offer membership to each attender of the Swahili Service demonstrates our desire for them to be contributors. They also give their offerings to

the general fund. This is not to say that because they contribute that they don't have need. Their refugee experience placed them in a position of significant need."

3. How have you treated them as a 'partner' in mission as opposed to an 'object' of mission?

Toland: "They have partnered with us in several projects including a 5K which raised money for our pregnancy center partners. They also have ideas to bless some churches in Africa and we are very interested in partnering with them in this initiative which they are driving."

Cashion: "We are partnered together to reach African refugees for Jesus. Wes and I work in partnership with J.J. and his leadership committee to accomplish this."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

Toland: "Not really."

Cashion: "Thankfully not."

5. Have there been any significant culture differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

Toland: "There are multiple cultural differences. They have longer services with more singing and dancing. We have different understandings of time. We also deal with keeping commitments in diverse ways. Our parental norms aren't the same either."

Cashion: “Our worship services are shorter than theirs. They include dancing and much more singing. Time is not the same for us. Tribalism is an issue within their community. Differences in language and communication also exist.”

Pantego Bible Church and ReGenesis⁷

ReGenesis and Pantego Bible Church began their partnership in September 2009. At the time, there was no congregation in Fort Worth that was specifically led by and for east African refugees. The partnership was initiated by a group of African leaders who were looking for a place to hold worship services; a place where the broader Burundian and Congolese communities could be invited to gather. Over time that is exactly what happened.

Today, ReGenesis is home to some seventy-plus family units that include over 200 individuals. Though the congregation is primarily Burundian, there are still a number of Congolese families who attend. ReGenesis has members from a multitude of religious and denominational backgrounds. The current pastor, Method Bigirimana, has been with the church since its inception but has only been its pastor since July 2013. Under Bigirimana’s leadership the church has been stable and healthy.

In its partnership with Pantego Bible Church, ReGenesis has received many benefits which include: 1) the use of facilities, 2) material support of families in need, 3) conflict resolution, 4) an apartment unit in a complex where many of the African once lived, 5) English as a Second Language classes, 6) citizenship classes, 7) financial support

⁷ Two interviews were undertaken for this partnership. The first interview was conducted with Mr. Method Bigirimana, Lead Pastor of ReGenesis, on Monday November 16, 2015 in person. The second interview was conducted with Mr. David Daniels, Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church, on Wednesday December 2, 2015 in person.

of ministry events and programs, and 8) pastoral training. However, the greatest benefit of the partnership according to Bigirimana is the opportunity to make disciples of the east African refugee community.

ReGenesis' pastor has been most appreciative of the consistent relationship that he and his congregation has had with Pantego Bible Church and its leaders. He points to the resilience and perseverance of Pantego Bible Church leaders through the struggles and conflicts which ReGenesis has endured over the past six years as the primary reason for the health and success of the partnership today. When asked questions regarding Jehu Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of congregational partnerships, Bigirimana gave the following answers:

1. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?

"Pantego Bible Church has allowed ReGenesis to be accountable to itself. Pantego Bible Church demonstrates trust towards ReGenesis and is not constantly looking over their shoulders. We feel appreciated and valued by Pantego Bible Church."

2. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?

"We are a 'needy group.' We have physical needs because we are refugees and we have spiritual needs because so many of us are still young in our faith."

3. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?

"We are partners in mission to reach east African refugees with the gospel."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

“There have not been any significant theological differences.”

5. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

“A few differences include: cleanliness, time, conflict resolution, and parenting differences.”

Bigirimana’s encouragement to other pastoral leaders interested in these kinds of partnerships was three-fold: 1) Be open to people who are different than you, 2) Don’t let money be the primary issue in the relationship – discipleship should be, and 3) Don’t be easily discouraged; instead persevere. David Daniels, Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church, agrees with Bigirimana that relationship should be the primary motivation in congregational partnerships. He noted that “being is more important than doing” in these relationships. Daniels also encouraged majority-culture pastors to identify “cultural translators” to assist the partnership. For Daniels and Pantego Bible Church, one of those “translators” was Celestin Musekura, President and Founder of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries. Practically, Daniels encouraged majority-culture leaders to “make their greatest investment in the leadership of the immigrant congregation.”

Pantego Bible Church, an increasingly diverse congregation of some 2,000 members in Fort Worth, Texas was finishing a building campaign when the African leaders first showed up at their church in 2009. Daniels remembers the African leaders

asking the elders of Pantego Bible Church for just “a small area of grass” on the church campus on which they could worship. Daniels immediately heard the Lord say, “I have given your children a large and beautiful place to worship through this building campaign. I have provided generously for you. Open your doors to this African refugee congregation.” Daniels shared that the compelling story of the refugees encouraged his congregation to be involved.

When asked about the contribution of the partnership to Pantego Bible Church, Daniels explained how the relationship with ReGenesis gave his church an opportunity to live out the gospel in radical ways; to be generous (without reciprocity) and to show compassion and hospitality. Daniels gave the following answers questions related to Hanciles Five Limiting Factors of Congregational Partnerships:

1. How have you sought to limit paternalism and condescension toward the immigrant church partner?

“We have increasingly learned to take our hands off of things concerning ReGenesis. We have entrusted the majority of the decisions to their pastor.”

2. How have you sought to treat them as a ‘contributing group’ instead of the ‘needy group’ within the partnership?

“I wouldn’t say they are a ‘contributing group’ in regards to the partnership. They are a participating group, however. Their children and students participate in our Sunday school and other ministry events and programs. They participate with us in our baptism services. We have had shared meals together.”

3. How have you treated them as a 'partner' in mission as opposed to an 'object' of mission?

"This is an area of growth for us. It starts with ReGenesis beginning to see themselves as partners and acting as such."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

"There have been a few that we have dealt with over the course of our partnership. They include baptismal regeneration and legalism."

5. Have there been any significant culture differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?

"Yes – dress, worship styles, parenting, community."

Highland Park Presbyterian Church and All Nations⁸

In 1998, Rev. Dr. Cyprian Guchiende left his native Kenya to begin Masters level studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. When Guchiende arrived on campus he was kindly welcomed by a couple from Highland Park Presbyterian Church. Guchiende, himself a Presbyterian, was invited to join their services the next Sunday. After attending Highland Park Presbyterian Church for a couple years, leaders began to recognize a pastoral gifting in Cyprian. In 2001, the presbytery asked Guchiende to be the leader of a new church development that would target African immigrants in the

⁸ The only interview conducted for this partnership was with Mr. Cyprian Guchiende, Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church and leader of the All Nations worship service, on Monday November 16, 2015 in person.

community. Originally, the leaders of Highland Park Presbyterian Church desired to plant the then-named African Presbyterian Fellowship as an independent church. However, over time this African congregation would be more greatly integrated into the heart and life of Highland Park Presbyterian Church. This integration would include not only bringing Guchiende onto the staff of Highland Park Presbyterian Church as an Associate Pastor but also inviting some of the members of his congregation to serve as elders on the church's session.

In 2009, African Presbyterian Fellowship became All Nations. Today, All Nations is a vibrant community of some 300 worshippers who hail from Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and other African nations. Unlike the other African congregations in this study, All Nations is not a refugee congregation. To the contrary, most of those who worship with All Nations immigrated to the United States with educational or work-related visas. The educational and professional traits of All Nations have encouraged a deeper integration of their body into the life and service of Highland Park Presbyterian Church.

When asked what factor has been most significant in the success of this partnership, Guchiende noted his personal relationship with Highland Park Presbyterian Church's previous two pastors, Rev. Clayton Bell and Dr. Ron Scates. It was during Scates' tenure that the partnership grew and flourished. Scates once told Guchiende that he did not appreciate the truthful perception that Highland Park Presbyterian Church was a "rich, white church" because the kingdom of Christ was neither. It was Scates' heart for a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic church that most resonated with Guchiende.

Guchiende was asked the same series of questions regarding Jehu Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of Congregational Partnerships. Here was his response:

1. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?

"Both partners have handled these issues with grace and patience. I have only experienced one glaring example of overt paternalism and it was not at the hands of a pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church."

2. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?

"It's important to understand two things. First, All Nations has always been included in the ministry budget of Highland Park Presbyterian Church. Second, we have never asked for financial assistance apart from the normal budgeting process for our ministry."

3. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?

"We may have started off as objects of mission but that has transitioned to a true partnership. Today, All Nations is not only serving alongside Highland Park Presbyterian Church but providing leadership in some cases. One example of this is how Highland Park Presbyterian Church is learning how to do home groups from us."

4. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

"None."

5. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

“There have been a few cultural differences. We worship longer. We have different views of time. We place a higher priority on community.”

Guchiende believes that other congregational leaders should highly consider these kinds of partnerships. He first points to the fact that “the world has come to our neighborhood.” These partnerships allow churches to not only make disciples of all nations but also to demonstrate unity through the Spirit. Congregational partnerships also help to bring down the wall between “us” and the “other.” Like Hanciles, Guchiende sees that the host-culture congregation has an opportunity to display hospitality to immigrant congregations.

No majority-culture Highland Park Presbyterian Church pastor was interviewed for this partnership for several reasons. First, Scates no longer serves as the pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church. His service ended there in 2013. No other pastor would have been able to speak intimately about this partnership. Second, Guchiende is an Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church and no longer has another pastor on staff that oversees the partnership. Third, the partnership between All Nations and Highland Park Presbyterian Church has reached a level of maturity over the past fourteen years in which the two have become fully integrated apart from the All Nations worship service.

The semi-structured interviews of these four partnerships have mined a wealth of information which point to some principles and practices that cultivate the

opportunity for healthy and enduring partnerships between African immigrant congregations and majority-culture churches. In the final chapter, an analysis of this information will be integrated with the other material discussed in this thesis-project to provide some final thoughts and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND REFLECTIONS

Outcomes

In November and December of 2015 nine pastors currently involved in congregational partnerships between African immigrant congregations and predominantly white Evangelical churches were interviewed to evaluate the nature of those partnerships and to identify any commonalities that produced health in those partnerships. The analysis which follows is an integration of the information gained from the nine interviews:

1. The partnerships ranged in length of time from five years to fourteen years. This information is important because it demonstrates a sense of commitment on the part of each partner. Method Bigirimana, Lead Pastor of ReGenesis, used the word “resiliency” to describe the way Pantego Bible Church has partnered with his congregation.¹
2. The primary motivation for the African immigrant churches to pursue a partnership lie in their desire to have a place to worship (this was not the case with the All Nations congregation as they were planted by Highland Park Presbyterian Church). The primary motivation of the majority-culture churches to either pursue or receive their partner was a missional impulse found within the DNA of the church. David Daniels, Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church, also mentioned the compelling

¹ Method Bigirimana, Lead Pastor of ReGenesis, was interviewed in person on Monday November 16, 2015.

narrative of Christian refugees who were at their doorstep requesting a place to worship.²

3. Each of the pastors interviewed described their partnership in a positive light, though each pastor also acknowledged that there was room for growth and development. When asked the question, “How would you describe the partnership today?” Brian Newby of Northwest Bible Church answered, “healthy-messy.”³ His answer is fairly representative of each of the majority-culture pastors’ feeling about their relationship with the African immigrant congregation. They believe their partnership is biblically and missiologically sound but they also note the cultural challenges that are commonplace within cross-cultural partnerships. Each of the majority-culture pastors mentioned that the African immigrant churches were as healthy as they had ever been. Three of the four African immigrant churches had gone through significant division and church splits but that was no longer occurring. The African pastors described their partnership in a variety of ways. One answered, “We are brothers and sisters in Christ, all doing the work of the kingdom.”⁴
4. An important part of the interviews involved asking the pastors questions related to Dr. Jehu Hanciles’ five factors limiting congregational partnerships. The goal of these questions was two-fold: 1) to determine the prevalence of these limiting

² David Daniels, Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church, was interviewed on Wednesday December 2, 2015 in person.

³ Brian Newby, Lead Outreach Minister at Northwest Bible Church, was interviewed via phone on Thursday December 10, 2015.

⁴ Justin “J.J.” Kiwovele, Lead Pastor of the Swahili Fellowship at Christ Chapel Bible Church was interviewed via phone on Saturday December 12, 2015 via phone.

factors in the partnerships interviewed and, 2) to discover how the majority-culture pastors felt they could grow in regards to these limiting factors. What follows is an analysis of the responses regarding each of the five limiting factors:

- a. *Paternalism and Condescension*: In all of the interviews with the immigrant pastors, only one instance of overt paternalism was mentioned. Cyprian Guchiende shared how years ago a lay committee member of the majority-culture church had sought to limit his ability to participate in an international mission trip. Thankfully, Highland Park Presbyterian Church's senior pastor stepped in and informed the lay committee member that they had no such authority. None of the immigrant pastors interviewed felt that the majority-culture church had demonstrated "paternalism and condescension" in any consistent or egregious way. In fact, the African immigrant pastors described both the freedom and respect they felt in their partnership with the majority-culture church. However, even with this information, we must be careful to not assume that paternalism is fully absent from these relationships. Anytime one partner has the "power of the purse" over the other partner, they are in a position to exercise paternalism, even unawares.
- b. *The Perception of African Immigrants as Needy and Dependent*: The answers to these questions proved interesting because three of the four African immigrant congregations involved in the study are predominantly (if not fully) comprised of refugees/former refugees. Method Bigirimana mentioned that his congregation was in a position of need not only because

of the financial limitations of his congregation but also because so many of his congregants were newer Christians. Justin Kiwovele and Jean Congera⁵ both expressed how their majority-culture partners had increasingly invited them to be contributors.

- c. *Entrenched Perception of Africans as Objects of Mission*: Cyprian Guchiende,⁶ Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church and leader of the All Nations worship service at the church, has the longest tenure in this kind of partnerships. He mentioned that Highland Park Presbyterian Church had matured in its perception of the All Nations congregation. At the beginning of the partnership they were probably seen primarily as “objects” of mission. Over time that transformed into being viewed as “partners” in mission. Today, Guchiende said they were viewed as “leaders” in mission. This transformation occurred because of multiple factors but two are worth mentioning. First, when Cyprian Guchiende transitioned from the Pastor of All Nations to an Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church (with one of his responsibilities including All Nations), staff and laity in the majority-culture church began seeing Cyprian as a leader within their ranks. Second, when Highland Park Presbyterian Church wanted to launch a new small groups ministry they turned to All Nations for guidance because the African congregation had been effectively executing a fruitful small groups

⁵ Jean Congera, a Committee Member of the African Missionary Fellowship, was interviewed on Sunday November 15, 2015 in person.

⁶ Cyprian Guchiende, Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church and leader of the All Nations worship service, was interviewed on Monday November 16, 2015 in person.

ministry for years. Though the other African immigrant pastors also expressed ways that the majority-culture churches had invited them to partner in mission, this factor may be the one in which the partnerships could most experience growth in the years to come. This sentiment was expressed by a number of pastors, both immigrant and majority-culture. Also worth considering is that both David Daniels and Brian Newby mentioned the need for the African congregations to increasingly see themselves as partners and key contributors. This element was definitely in play in the transformation that took place with All Nations and Highland Park Presbyterian Church.

- d. *Theological Difference and Spiritual Dissonance*: The pastors interviewed did not believe there were any significant theological differences between their congregations. They acknowledged that there had been some minor issues along the way but nothing which had ever endangered their fellowship. Jean Congera mentioned how African Missionary Fellowship and Northwest Bible Church have different views regarding the “sign” gifts (Northwest Bible Church holds the cessationist position; African Missionary Fellowship believes these gifts are still operative), but that Northwest Bible Church did not make this a condition of their partnership with African Missionary Fellowship.
- e. *Segmented Religious Landscape*: The segmentation which Hanciles addressed was primarily concerned with cultural differences within Christianity. All of the respondents mentioned differences in culture between their

congregations. The list included differences in time, dress, worship style, parenting, community, language, power dynamics, leadership, and cleanliness. Each pastor expressed a certain measure of grace which they had extended and which had been extended to them regarding these cultural differences.

Overall, the pastors interviewed demonstrated at least five reasons why their partnerships were healthy and why they had endured – Hanciles five limiting factors were not present in any significant way within their partnerships. One of the key factors contributing to an overall healthy viewpoint of each partnership is the personal relationship which exists between the immigrant pastor and the majority-culture pastor. Had these interviews included lay members of the partnerships, who typically do not have the same depth of relationship cross-congregationally, I believe the findings would not have been as favorable.

5. The final question asked of the pastors was, “What would you say to other church leaders (both African and majority-culture) who are considering this kind of partnership?” Their responses included rich expressions of kingdom values and valuable wisdom regarding the practices of successful congregational partnerships. Though their responses were mentioned in Chapter Four, they are worth listing here.

- a. Method Bigirimana, Lead Pastor of ReGenesis

- i. Don’t allow money to be the primary factor in the relationship.

- ii. Don't be discouraged when there are difficulties in the partnership; especially in the beginning.
 - iii. Be open to people who are different.
- b. Cyprian Guchiende, Associate Pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church and Leader of the All Nations worship service
 - i. The world has come to our neighborhood.
 - ii. The church is called to demonstrate hospitality.
 - iii. You can find unity with other Christians through the gift of the Spirit.
 - iv. We should make everyone "us."
- c. Justin Kiwovele, Lead Pastor of the Swahili Fellowship of Christ Chapel Bible Church
 - i. God is calling all nations into his kingdom.
 - ii. The mission field is right here.
 - iii. Don't settle for being comfortable.
- d. Paul Mbayeko, Preaching Pastor of the African Missionary Fellowship
 - i. Emphasize patience and grace in the partnership.
- e. Lance Cashion, Local Outreach Director of Christ Chapel Bible Church⁷
 - i. It comes down to calling.
 - ii. Know that even though it's messy, it's worth it.
 - iii. Commit first to a trial period and be clear on expectations.

⁷ Lance Cashion, Local Outreach Director at Christ Chapel Bible Church, was interviewed on Wednesday November 18, 2015 in person.

f. Wesley Toland, Local Outreach Associate Director at Christ Chapel Bible Church⁸

- i. Welcoming the stranger is a biblical mandate.
- ii. Cultural diversity helps develop your church missionally.
- iii. Be humble with others who are different from you.
- iv. These partnerships allow for deep friendships across cultures.

g. David Daniels, Senior Pastor of Pantego Bible Church

- i. Make your greatest investment in the leaders.
- ii. Find resources to help you with the cultural differences.
- iii. Remember that being is more important than doing. Spending time in relationship with the other church's leaders is key.

h. Brian Newby, Lead Outreach Minister at Northwest Bible Church

- i. Embrace the messiness! It's worth it.
- ii. These partnerships will give your church a greater realization of the gospel.
- iii. [To the immigrant church leaders] See yourselves as contributors from the beginning of the partnership. And, act like it.

The information mined from these interviews offers a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to congregational leaders who have an interest in cross-cultural congregational partnerships. In the years to come this study could be repeated and include additional actors both within the congregational partnerships and outside observers. Janel Kragt

⁸ Wesley Toland, Local Outreach Associate Director at Christ Chapel Bible Church, was interviewed on Tuesday November 17, 2015 in person.

Bakker's work in *Sister Churches* is a helpful model of research for future inquiry into congregation-to-congregation partnerships.⁹ In the section that follows, I will bring together this information plus material from other sources referenced in this project to offer three essentials to developing healthy local cross-cultural congregational partnerships.

Reflections

In his insightful book *Western Christians in Global Mission*, Paul Borthwick states that the American church needs "to learn how to participate from a platform of servanthood rather than power" in its interaction with Christians from the Majority World.¹⁰ This "posture of humility" applies as much to local cross-cultural interactions as it does to international relationships. As I reflect upon the essentials of healthy local cross-cultural congregational partnerships, three expressions of humility by majority-culture churches are required.

Missional Humility

Majority-culture churches will become more open to partnering with immigrant churches when they begin to express missional humility. Missional humility begins with a recognition that one's own culture and prior mission experience can play too large of a role in their understanding of how God is working in the world. This recognition should then lead to a more humble position in one's engagement with others in God's mission.

⁹ Janel Kragt Bakker, *Sister Churches: American Congregations and Their Partners Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁰ Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 104.

In the context of this thesis-project, missional humility is tied to three factors: 1) the role of migration in the redemptive plan of God, 2) the missional identity of Christian immigrants, and 3) the missional needs of the increasingly post-Christian West.

Adopting a biblical theology of migration will encourage Christian leaders in the West to begin viewing the Christian migrant who arrives on their shores through the lens of Abraham's sojourning or the scattering of the disciples after the stoning of Stephen. They will see them as being "sent" rather than simply escaping the risks associated with poverty in the developing world. Some Evangelical pastors within the United States will need to lay aside their political views on migration to adopt this biblical perspective. Thankfully, God's Word is replete with the missional nature of his people's migrations; as evidenced in Chapter Two of this project. Where a biblical theology of migration is present, churches will be more interested in fostering relationships with those whom God has sent into their community for his missional purposes.¹¹

Missional humility also involves accepting the reality that the United States can greatly benefit from the fervent faith of Christian immigrants and their churches. Though the American church continues to be a significant mission-sending source, it is increasingly at home in a mission-receiving destination. Partnership with immigrant churches demonstrates that majority-culture churches desire to collaborate missionally for the sake of the gospel within the United States. Christian immigrants not only

¹¹ It seems that the majority-culture churches involved in this project may not have had a *mature* understanding of the missional nature of Christian migrants when they became their partnership with the immigrant congregation. However, they each had a history of cross-cultural missional partnerships and a kingdom view of missions, which included the participation of all nations in God's redemptive plan.

disciple their own communities but they also have greater access to other immigrant groups than most majority-culture Christians.

It is also worth noting that *missional confidence* on the part of the immigrant congregation is also essential for the partnership to be a true collaboration. Some immigrants struggle with feelings of inferiority either because of their reduced station in American society or due to the marginalization that many of them experience. To the extent that they allow the gospel to inform their Christian identity and their missional calling, immigrant believers will be in a position to be leaders of the Great Commission in the United States. As discovered in the interview with the All Nations group at Highland Park Presbyterian Church, missional confidence puts Christian immigrants in a position to demonstrate missional leadership.

Cultural Humility

Feelings of cultural superiority are alive and well among every culture and civilization, though they are probably most pronounced in the West's dealings with the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the American Church has often embodied this attitude toward brothers and sisters from the Global South. As church leaders in the United States increasingly come into contact with immigrant church leaders in their community they will be wise to heed the words of Jesus, "He who is least among you all is the one who is great."¹²

A hallmark found in each of the congregational partnerships interviewed in this project was grace in the midst of difference. Each of the partners (both African leaders

¹² Luke 9:48.

and majority-culture leaders) mentioned several cultural distinctions between their community and that of the other congregation. The African pastors noted that there was less of an emphasis on community in the majority-culture church and that in their opinion some of the women in the majority-culture church dressed immodestly. The majority-culture pastors expressed their concern with some of the parenting practices of the African community and wished that their African brothers would be more Western in their keeping of time. Yet, in the midst of these differences, and many more, each side chose to demonstrate humility in the area of non-essentials. The gospel was the foundation for their dealings with one another. They chose to actually believe that in Christ there is “neither Jew nor Greek.”¹³

I believe there were two key ingredients which helped to foster the cultural humility expressed in these partnerships: 1) the presence of cultural translators within at least one of the congregations in each of the partnerships, and 2) the willingness on the part of the majority-culture church to learn about the culture of the immigrant congregation. First, a cultural translator is someone who has the ability to speak for both groups, both cultures. Though this usually involves competency in the native languages of the two groups, it is much deeper than that. This individual has enough understanding of both cultures to effectively communicate between the communities. The cultural translator helps the two groups develop trust and unity. Second, the majority-culture churches often sought help from leaders outside of their congregational partner to better understand the characteristics unique to the immigrant

¹³ Galatians 3:28.

church's culture. That counsel was provided by individuals ranging from a cultural anthropologist to an African ministry leader to a graduate level international student from a common cultural background.

Relational Humility

Another essential element to healthy local cross-cultural congregational partnerships is relational humility. Relational humility occurs when relationships move from the transactional to the transformational. It's when two people associated or partnered in some way become more defined by their personal relationship than by their formal association. Relational humility is best expressed in the context of friendship, and friendship is foundational for mutuality in mission. As one of my mentors (who also happens to be my friend) often says, "The kingdom advances among friends."¹⁴

Three of the four partnerships in this thesis-project began when the immigrant congregation requested that the majority-culture church allow them space to hold worship services. Each of the majority-culture churches opened their doors to their immigrant brothers and sisters. This demonstration of hospitality by the majority-culture churches was not only commendable but it was in line with the call of God for his people to "welcome the stranger."¹⁵ However, had their interaction been limited to the use of space, then the transactional would not have moved to the transformational. Transactional relationships, because they are based upon performance of certain

¹⁴ Dr. Bob Bakke is Teaching Pastor of Hillside Church in Bloomington, Minnesota.

¹⁵ Matthew 25:35.

standards, rarely embody the kind of intimacy and grace that are required in healthy missional partnerships. By God's grace and direction, leaders from the two congregations began to pursue each other in friendship. The cultural translator in the immigrant church usually developed the deepest friendships with the majority-culture church leaders.

For local cross-cultural congregational partnerships to be fruitful, majority-culture pastors must be willing and interested in fostering friendships with their counterparts in the immigrant church. Though from outward appearances these friendships may offer no gain to the majority-culture leader, there is great reward in walking with brothers and sisters from the Global South. Jehu Hanciles offers a fitting charge to American church leaders regarding the opportunity to build friendships with Christian immigrants in their community:

The need for Western (homegrown) Christian communities and congregations to explore meaningful ways of extending hospitality to immigrant Christian groups is urgent. Among other things, this will require the painstaking effort of building friendships and "making room" (or making allowance for "difference"). But to bear fruit, extending the hand of fellowship must be accompanied by studious efforts to establish mutuality and trust at the leadership levels.¹⁶

May these friendships and partnerships increase for the sake of the unity of the Body and the glory of God among all nations.

¹⁶ Jehu J. Hanciles, "Migrants as Missionaries, Missionaries as Outsiders: Reflections on African Christian Presence in Western Societies," *Mission Studies* 30, no. 1 (2013): 84.

APPENDIX A

AFRICAN CHURCH LEADER'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about yourself:
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. Tell me about your family.
 - c. Where are you originally from?
 - d. How long have you been in the United States?
 - e. What is your position in this church?
 - f. How long have you served in this position?
2. Tell me about your church:
 - a. When did your church first organize?
 - b. How long have you been meeting here?
 - c. What nationalities and ethnicities are represented in your church?
 - d. How many people attend your church?
3. When did your church begin a partnership with a majority-culture church?
4. Why did you desire a partnership with a majority-culture church?
5. How did you pursue that partnership?
6. What led you to choose this church with which to partner?
7. What has that partnership included since it began?
8. How would you describe the partnership today?
9. How has the partnership evolved over time?

10. What has been the most significant contribution of the majority-culture church to your congregation?

11. What would you change about the partnership?

12. Questions connected to Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of Partnership?

a. Has the majority-culture church demonstrated paternalism or condescension?

i. How so?

b. Has the majority-culture treated you as 'needy group' or a 'contributing group' regarding the partnership?

i. How so?

c. Has the majority-culture church treated you as an 'object' of mission or as a 'partner' in mission?

i. How so?

d. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

i. If so, what?

e. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the majority-culture church?

i. Is so, what?

13. What would you say to other church leaders (both African and majority culture) who are considering this kind of partnership?

APPENDIX B

MAJORITY-CULTURE CHURCH LEADER'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about yourself:
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. What is your position in this church?
 - c. How long have you served in this position?
 - d. What is your particular responsibility regarding the African immigrant congregation with which your church partners?
2. Tell me about your church:
 - a. What denomination is your church?
 - b. What is the average Sunday attendance?
 - c. How would you describe the racial and socioeconomic status of the majority of your church members?
3. When did your church begin a partnership with an African immigrant church?
4. How did that partnership begin?
5. What led you to be open to that partnership?
6. What has that partnership included since it began?
7. How would you describe the partnership today?
8. How has the partnership evolved over time?
9. What has been the most significant contribution of the African immigrant church to your congregation?
10. What would you change about the partnership?

11. Questions connected to Hanciles' Five Limiting Factors of Partnership?

- a. How have you sought to limit paternalism or condescension toward the immigrant church?
 - i. How would you like to grow in this area?
- b. How have you sought to treat them as a 'contributing group' instead of a 'needy group' regarding the partnership?
 - i. How would you like to grow in this area?
- c. How have you treated them as a 'partner' in mission as opposed to an 'object' of mission?
 - i. How would you like to grow in this area?
- d. Have there been any significant theological differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?
 - i. If so, what?
- e. Have there been any significant cultural differences between your congregation and the African immigrant church?
 - i. Is so, what?

12. What would you say to other church leaders (both African and majority culture) who are considering this kind of partnership?

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Roger Guy Sappington was born in Galveston, Texas on December 5, 1979 and grew up in the nearby town of Alvin, Texas. After graduating from Alvin High School in 1998, he matriculated to The University of Texas in Austin. Roger would go on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies with a minor in Philosophy. In his senior year at The University of Texas, he sensed a call to pastoral ministry. After graduating in 2002, he began seminary studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. At the same time, Roger took an internship at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas. He served at Prestonwood Baptist Church for the next three years in the student ministry and missions department. By 2006 Roger had graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity and was now serving with an urban ministry in Dallas, Texas called H.I.S. BridgeBuilders. In 2011, Roger received a call from Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas where he currently serves as the Lead Pastor of Community and Mission. He began his Doctor of Ministry studies in 2013 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the Global Christianity program and expects to graduate in May 2016. Roger has been married to Kelly since 2006. They are blessed with three children, Colin, Brady, and Harper.